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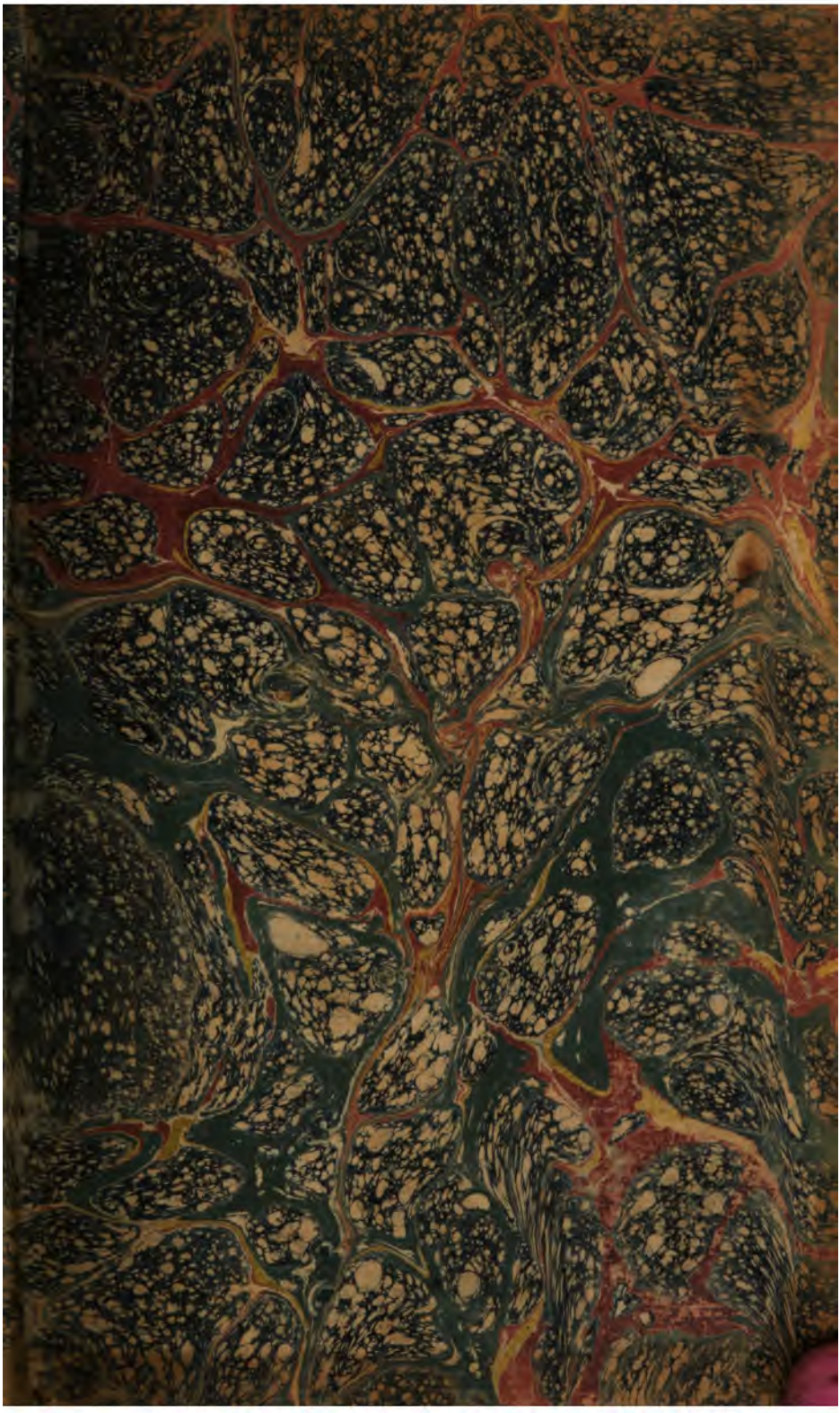

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A

VIEW

OF THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

VOL. II.

A

VIEW

OF THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I. Of the direct Hiſtorical Evidence of Chriſtianity, and wherein it is diſtinguiſhed from the Evidence alledged for other Miracles.

PART II. Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Chriſtianity.

PART. III. A brief Conſideration of ſome popular Objections.

BY WILLIAM PALEY, M. A.

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PART II.

OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I.

Prophecy.

Iſa. lii. 13. liii. "BEHOLD, my ſervant ſhall deal prudently, he ſhall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high. As many were aſtoniſhed at thee; his viſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men: ſo ſhall he ſprinkle many nations; the kings ſhall ſhut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them ſhall they ſee; and that which they had not heard ſhall they conſider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

For he ſhall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him; and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from judgement; and who ſhall declare his generation? for he was cut

off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; becauſe he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him; he hath put him to grief. When thou ſhalt make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the travail of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied: by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many; for he ſhall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he ſhall divide the ſpoil with the ſtrong; becauſe he hath poured out his ſoul unto death: and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors; and he bare the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors."

Theſe words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer,

who lived ſeven centuries before the Chriſtian æra.

That material part of every argument from prophecy, namely, that the words alledged were actually ſpoken or written before the fact to which they are applied took place, or could by any natural means be foreſeen, is, in the preſent inſtance, inconteſtable. The record comes out of the cuſtody of adverſaries. The Jews, as an ancient father well obſerved, are our librarians. The paſſage is in their copies as well as in ours. With many attempts to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to diſcredit its authenticity.

And, what adds to the force of the quotation is, that it is taken from a writing *declaredly prophetic*; a writing, profeſſing to deſcribe ſuch future tranſactions and changes in the world, as were connected with the fate and intereſts of the Jewiſh nation. It is not a paſſage in an hiſtorical

or devotional compoſition, which, becauſe it turns out to be applicable to ſome future events, or to ſome future ſituation of affairs, is preſumed to have been oracular. The words of Iſaiah were delivered by him in a prophetic character, with the ſolemnity belonging to that character; and what he ſo delivered, was all along underſtood by the Jewiſh reader to refer to ſomething that was to take place after the time of the author. The public ſentiments of the Jews, concerning the deſign of Iſaiah's writings, are ſet forth in the book of Eccleſiaſticus: "He ſaw, by an excellent ſpirit, what ſhould come to paſs at the laſt, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He ſhewed what ſhould come to paſs for ever, and ſecret things or ever they came." (ch. xlviii. ver. 24.)

It is alſo an advantage which this prophecy poſſeſſes, that it is intermixed with no other ſubject. It is entire, ſeparate, and uninterruptedly directed to one ſcene of things.

The *application* of the prophecy to the evangelic hiſtory is plain and appropriate. Here is no double ſenſe: no figurative language, but what is ſufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. The obſcurities, by which I mean the expreſſions that require a knowledge of local diction, and of local alluſion, are few, and not of great importance. Nor have I found that varieties of reading, or a different conſtruing of the original, produce any material alteration in the ſenſe of the prophecy. Compare the common tranſlation with that of Biſhop Lowth, and the difference is not conſiderable. So far as they do differ, Biſhop Lowth's corrections, which are the faithful reſult of an accurate examination, bring the deſcription nearer to the New Teſtament hiſtory than it was before. In the fourth verſe of the fifty-third chapter, what our Bible renders "ſtricken," he tranſlates "judicially ſtricken:" and in the eighth verſe, the clauſe "he was taken from priſon and from judgement," the Biſhop gives "by an oppreſſive judgement he was taken off."

The

The next words to theſe, " who ſhall declare his generation ?" are much cleared up in their meaning by the Biſhop's verſion, " his manner of life who would declare ?" *i. e.* who would ſtand forth in his defence ? The former part of the ninth verſe, " and he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," which inverts the circumſtances of Chriſt's paſſion, the Biſhop brings out in an order perfectly agreeable to the event ; " and his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." The words in the eleventh verſe, " by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many," are in the Biſhop's verſion " by the *knowledge of him* ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many."

It is natural to enquire what turn the Jews themſelves give to this prophecy *. There is

* " Vaticinium hoc Eſaiæ eſt carnificina Rabbinorum, de quo aliqui Judæi mihi confeſſi ſunt, Rabbinos, ſuos ex propheticis ſcripturis facile ſe extricare potuiſſe, *modo Eſaias tacuiſſet.*" Hulſe Theol. Jud. p. 318, quoted by Poole in loc.

good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it of their expected Meſſiah *; but their modern expoſitors concur, I think, in repreſenting it as a deſcription of the calamitous ſtate and intended reſtoration of the Jewiſh people, who are here, as they ſay, exhibited under the character of a ſingle perſon. I have not diſcovered that their expoſition reſts upon any critical arguments, or upon theſe in any other than a very minute degree. The clauſe in the ninth verſe, which we render "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken," and in the margin "was the ſtroke upon him," the Jews read "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was the ſtroke upon *them*." And what they alledge in ſupport of the alteration amounts only to this, that the Hebrew pronoun is capable of a plural, as well as of a ſingular ſignification; that is to ſay, is capable of their conſtruction as well as ours †.

And

* Hulſe Theol. Jud. p. 430.

† Biſhop Lowth adopts in this place the reading of the Seventy, which gives ſmitten *to death*, "for the tranſ-

And this is all the variation contended for: the reſt of the prophecy they read as we do.

The

tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſmitten to death." The addition of the words "to death," makes an end of the Jewiſh interpretation of the clauſe. And the authority, upon which this reading (though not given by the preſent Hebrew text) is adopted, Dr. Kennicot has ſet forth by an argument, not only ſo cogent, but ſo clear and popular, that I beg leave to tranſcribe the ſubſtance of it into this note. "Origen, after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Meſſiah, tells us, that having once made uſe of this paſſage, in a diſpute againſt ſome that were accounted wiſe among the Jews, one of them replied, that the words did not mean one man, but one people, the Jews, who were ſmitten of God, and diſperſed among the Gentiles for their converſion; that he then urged many parts of this prophecy, to ſhow the abſurdity of this interpretation, and that he ſeemed to preſs them the hardeſt by this ſentence—"for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſmitten to death." Now, as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, muſt have underſtood Hebrew, we cannot ſuppoſe that he would have urged this laſt text as ſo deciſive, if the Greek verſion had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that theſe wiſe Jews would have been at all diſtreſſed by this quotation, unleſs the Hebrew text had read agreeably to the words "to death," on which the argument principally depended; for, by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed

over

The probability, therefore, of their expoſition is a ſubject of which we are as capable of judging as themſelves. This judgement is open indeed to the good ſenſe of every attentive reader. The application which the Jews contend for, appears to me to labour under inſuperable difficulties; in particular, it may be demanded of them to explain, in *whoſe* name or perſon, if the Jewiſh people be the ſufferer, does the prophet ſpeak, when he ſays, "he hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* ſorrows, yet *we*

over him, and reprobated his Greek verſion. This, whenever they could do it, was their conſtant practice in their diſputes with the Chriſtians. Origen himſelf, who laboriouſly compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the neceſſity of arguing with the Jews, from ſuch paſſages only, as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew. Wherefore, as Origen had carefully compared the Greek verſion of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews, by urging upon them the reading "to death" in this place; it ſeems almoſt impoſſible not to conclude, both from Origen's argument, and the ſilence of his Jewiſh adverſaries, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had the word agreeably to the verſion of the Seventy." Lowth's Iſaiah, p. 242.

did

did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God and afflicted; but he was wounded for *our* tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for *our* iniquities, the chaſtiſement of *our* peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes *we* are healed." Again, the deſcription in the ſeventh verſe, " he was oppreſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth," quadrates with no part of the Jewiſh hiſtory with which we are acquainted. The mention of the " grave," and the " tomb," in the ninth verſe, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation; and ſtill leſs ſo is the concluſion of the prophecy in the twelfth verſe, which expreſsly repreſents the ſufferings as *voluntary*, and the ſufferer as interceding for the offenders, " becauſe he hath poured out his ſoul unto death, and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and he bare the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors."

There are other prophecies of the Old Teſtament,

Teſtament, interpreted by Chriſtians to relate to the goſpel hiſtory, which are deſerving both of great regard, and of a very attentive conſideration: but I content myſelf with ſtating the above, as well becauſe I think it the cleareſt and the ſtrongeſt of all, as becauſe moſt of the reſt, in order that their value be repreſented with any tolerable degree of fidelity, require a diſcuſſion unſuitable to the limits and nature of this work. The reader will find them diſpoſed in order, and diſtinctly explained, in Biſhop Chandler's treatiſe upon the ſubject: and he will bear in mind, what has been often, and, I think, truly, urged by the advocates of Chriſtianity, that there is no other eminent perſon, to the hiſtory of whoſe life ſo many circumſtances can be made to apply. They who object, that much has been done by the power of chance, the ingenuity of accommodation, and the induſtry of reſearch, ought to try whether the ſame, or any thing like it, could be done, if Mahomet, or any other perſon, were propoſed as the ſubject of Jewiſh prophecy.

II. A ſecond head of argument from prophecy, is founded upon our Lord's predictions concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, recorded by three out of the four evangeliſts.

Luke xxi. 5—25. "And as ſome ſpake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly ſtones and gifts, he ſaid, As for theſe things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there ſhall not be left one ſtone upon another, that ſhall not be thrown down. And they aſked him, ſaying, Maſter, but when ſhall theſe things be? and what ſign ſhall there be when theſe things ſhall come to paſs? And he ſaid, Take heed that ye be not deceived, for many ſhall come in my name ſaying, I am Chriſt; and the time draweth near. Go ye not therefore after them. But, when ye ſhall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for theſe things muſt firſt come to paſs, but the end is not by and by. Then ſaid he unto them, Nation ſhall riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt kingdom, and great earth-

earthquakes ſhall be in divers places, and famines and peſtilences: and fearful ſights, and great ſigns ſhall there be from heaven. But before all theſe, they ſhall lay their hands on you, and perſecute you, delivering you up to the ſynagogues, and into priſons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's ſake. And it ſhall turn to you for a teſtimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye ſhall anſwer; for I will give you a mouth and wiſdom, which all your adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay nor reſiſt. And ye ſhall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; and ſome of you ſhall they cauſe to be put to death. And ye ſhall be hated of all men for my name's ſake. But there ſhall not an hair of your head periſh. In your patience poſſeſs ye your ſouls. And when ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midſt of it depart out; and let not them that are

in

in the countries enter thereinto. For theſe be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give ſuck, in thoſe days; for there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations; and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In terms nearly ſimilar, this diſcourſe is related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of Mark. The proſpect of the ſame evils drew from our Saviour upon another occaſion, the following affecting expreſſions of concern, which are preſerved by St. Luke (xix. 41): "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes, for the

the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another, becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation." Theſe paſſages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the ſame event, ſome plain, ſome parabolical, or otherwiſe figurative, are found in divers other diſcourſes of our Lord *.

The general agreement of the deſcription with the event, viz. with the ruin of the Jewiſh nation, and the capture of Jeruſalem under Veſpaſian, thirty-ſix years after Chriſt's death, is moſt evident: and the accordancy in various articles of detail and circumſtance has been ſhewn by many learned writers. It is alſo an advantage to the enquiry, and to the argument built upon it, that we have

* Mat. xxi. 33—46. xxii. 1—7. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xiii. 1—9. xx. 9—20. xxi. 5—13.

received

received a copious account of the tranſaction from Joſephus, a Jewiſh and contemporary hiſtorian. This part of the caſe is perfectly free from doubt. The only queſtion which, in my opinion, can be raiſed upon the ſubject, is, whether the prophecy was really delivered *before* the event. I ſhall apply, therefore, my obſervations to this point ſolely.

1. The judgement of antiquity, though varying in the preciſe year of the publication of the three goſpels, *concurs* in aſſigning them a date prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem *.

2. This judgement is confirmed by a ſtrong probability ariſing from the courſe of human life. The deſtruction of Jeruſalem took place in the ſeventieth year after the birth of Chriſt. The three evangeliſts, one of whom was his immediate companion, and the other two aſſociated with his companions, were, it is probable, not much

* Lardner, vol. xiii.

younger than he was. They muſt, conſequently, have been far advanced in life when Jeruſalem was taken; and no reaſon has been given why they ſhould defer writing their hiſtories ſo long.

3. * If the evangeliſts, at the time of writing the goſpels, had known of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by which cataſtrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is moſt probable, that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped ſome word or other about the completion; in like manner as Luke, after relating the denunciation of a dearth by Agabus, adds, "which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Cæſar †:" whereas the prophecies are given diſtinctly in one chapter of each of the three firſt goſpels, and referred to in ſeveral different paſſages of each, and, in none of all theſe places, does there appear the ſmalleſt intimation that the things ſpoken of were

* Le Clerc, Diſſ. III. de Quat. Ev. num. vii. p. 541.

† Acts xi. 28.

come

come to paſs. I do admit that it would have been the part of an impoſtor, who wiſhed his readers to believe that his book was written before the event, when in truth it was written after it, to have ſuppreſſed any ſuch intimation carefully. But this was not the character of the authors of the goſpel. Cunning was no quality of theirs. Of all writers in the world, they thought the leaſt of providing againſt objections. Moreover, there is no clauſe in any one of them, that makes a profeſſion of having written prior to the Jewiſh wars, which a fraudulent purpoſe would have led them to pretend. They have done neither one thing nor the other. They have neither inſerted any words, which might ſignify to the reader that their accounts were written *before* the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which a ſophiſt would have done; nor have they dropped a hint of the completion of the prophecies recorded by them, which an *undeſigning* writer, writing *after* the event, could hardly, on ſome or other of the many occaſions that preſented themſelves, have miſſed of doing.

4. The admonitions * which Chriſt is repreſented to have given to his followers to ſave themſelves by flight, are not eaſily accounted for upon the ſuppoſition of the prophecy being fabricated after the event. Either the Chriſtians, when the ſiege approached, did make their eſcape from Jeruſalem, or they did not: if they did, they muſt have had the prophecy amongſt them: if they did not know of any ſuch prediction at the time of the ſiege, if they did not take notice of any ſuch warning, it was an improbable fiction, in a writer publiſhing his

* Luke xxi. 20. 21. "When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midſt of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto."

Mat. xiv. 18. "When ye ſhall ſee Jerufalem compaſſed with armies, then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains; let him which is on the houſe top not come down to take any thing out of his houſe, neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."

work

work near to that time (which, upon any even the loweſt and moſt diſadvantageous ſuppoſition, was the caſe with the goſpels now in our hands), and addreſſing his work to Jews and to Jewiſh converts (which Matthew certainly did), to ſtate that the followers of Chriſt had received admonitions, of which they made no uſe when the occaſion arrived, and of which, experience then recent proved, that thoſe, who were moſt concerned to know and regard them, were ignorant or negligent. Even if the prophecies came to the hands of the evangeliſts through no better vehicle than tradition, it muſt have been by a tradition which ſubſiſted prior to the event. And to ſuppoſe, that without any authority whatever, without ſo much as even any tradition to guide them, they had forged theſe paſſages, is to impute to them a degree of fraud and impoſture, from every appearance of which their compoſitions are as far removed as poſſible.

5. I think that, if the prophecies had been

compoſed after the event, there would have been more ſpecification. The names or deſcriptions of the enemy, the general, the emperor, would have been found in them. The deſignation of the time would have been more determinate. And I am fortified in this opinion by obſerving, that the counterfeited prophecies of the Sybilline oracles, of the twelve patriarchs, and, I am inclined to believe, moſt others of the kind, are mere tranſcripts of the hiſtory, moulded into a prophetic form.

It is objected that the prophecy of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem is mixed, or connected, with expreſſions which relate to the final judgement of the world; and ſo connected, as to lead an ordinary reader to expect, that theſe two events would not be far diſtant from each other. To which I anſwer, that the objection does not concern our preſent argument. If our Saviour actually foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, it is ſufficient; even although we ſhould allow, that the narration of the prophecy had

had combined together what had been ſaid by him upon kindred ſubjects, without accurately preſerving the order, or always noticing the tranſition of the diſcourſe.

CHAP. II.

The morality of the goſpel.

IN ſtating the morality of the goſpel as an argument of its truth, I am willing to admit two points; firſt, that the teaching of morality was not the primary deſign of the miſſion; ſecondly, that morality, neither in the goſpel, nor in any other book, can be a ſubject, properly ſpeaking, of diſcovery.

If I were to deſcribe in a very few words the ſcope of Chriſtianity, as a *revelation* *, I ſhould ſay, that it was to influence the

* Great and ineſtimably beneficial effects may accrue from the miſſion of Chriſt, and eſpecially from his death, which do not belong to Chriſtianity as a *revelation*; that is, they might have exiſted, and they might have been accompliſhed, though we had never, in this life, been made acquainted with them. Theſe effects may be very extenſive. They may be intereſting even to other orders of intelligent beings. I think it is a general opinion, and one to which I have long come, that the beneficial effects of Chriſt's death extend to the whole human ſpecies. It was the redemption of *the world*. "He is the propitiation for our ſins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world." 1 John, ii. 2. Probably the future happineſs, perhaps the future exiſtence of the ſpecies, and more gracious terms of acceptance extended *to all*, might depend upon it, or be procured by it. Now theſe effects, whatever they be, do not belong to Chriſtianity as a *revelation*; becauſe they exiſt with reſpect to thoſe to whom *it is not revealed*.

conduct

conduct of human life, by eſtabliſhing the proof of a future ſtate of rewardand puniſhment—"to bring life and immortality to light." The direct object, therefore, of the deſign is, to ſupply motives, and not rules; ſanctions, and not precepts. And theſe were what mankind ſtood moſt in need of. The members of civilized ſociety can, in all ordinary caſes, judge tolerably well how they ought to act; but without a future ſtate, or, which is the ſame thing, without credited evidence of that ſtate, they want a *motive* to their duty; they want at leaſt ſtrength of motive, ſufficient to bear up againſt the force of paſſion, and the temptation of preſent advantage. Their rules want authority. The moſt important ſervice that can be rendered to human life, and that, conſequently, which, one might expect beforehand, would be the great end and office of a revelation from God, is to convey to the world authoriſed aſſurances of the reality of a future exiſtence. And although, in doing this, or by the miniſtry of the ſame perſon by which this is done, moral precepts, or examples,

or

or illuſtrations of moral precepts, may be occaſionally given, and be highly valuable, yet ſtill they do not form the original purpoſe of the miſſion.

Secondly, morality, neither in the goſpel, nor in any other book, can be a ſubject of diſcovery, properly ſo called. By which propoſition, I mean that there cannot, in morality, be any thing ſimilar to what are called diſcoveries in natural philoſophy, in the arts of life, and in ſome ſciences; as the ſyſtem of the univerſe, the circulation of the blood, the polarity of the magnet, the laws of gravitation, alphabetical writing, decimal arithmetic, and ſome other things of the ſame ſort; facts, or proofs, or contrivances, before totally unknown and unthought of. Whoever therefore expects, in reading the New Teſtament, to be ſtruck with diſcoveries in morals, in the manner in which his mind was affected when he firſt came to the knowledge of the diſcoveries above mentioned; or rather in the manner in which the world was affected by them,

them, when they were firſt publiſhed; expects what, as I apprehend, the nature of the ſubject renders it impoſſible that he ſhould meet with. And the foundation of my opinion is this, that the qualities of actions depend entirely upon their effects, which effects muſt all along have been the ſubject of human experience.

When it is once ſettled, no matter upon what principle, that to do good is virtue, the reſt is calculation. But ſince the calculation cannot be inſtituted concerning each particular action, we eſtabliſh intermediate rules: by which proceeding, the buſineſs of morality is much facilitated, for then, it is concerning our rules alone that we need enquire, whether in their tendency they be beneficial; concerning our actions we have only to aſk, whether they be agreeable to the rules. We refer actions to rules, and rules to public happineſs. Now, in the formation of theſe rules, there is no place for diſcovery properly ſo called, but there is ample

ample room for the exerciſe of wiſdom, judgement, and prudence.

As I wiſh to deliver argument rather than panegyric, I ſhall treat of the morality of the goſpel, in ſubjection to theſe obſervations. And after all, I think it ſuch a morality, as, conſidering from whom it came, is moſt extraordinary; and ſuch as, without allowing ſome degree of reality to the character and pretenſions of the religion, it is difficult to account for: or, to place the argument a little lower in the ſcale, it is ſuch a morality as completely repels the ſuppoſition of its being the tradition of a barbarous age or of a barbarous people, of the religion being founded in folly, or of its being the production of craft; and it repels alſo, in a great degree, the ſuppoſition of its having been the effuſion of an enthuſiaſtic mind.

The diviſion, under which the ſubject may be moſt conveniently treated of, is that of

of the things taught, and the manner of teaching.

Under the firſt head, I ſhould willingly, if the limits and nature of my work admitted of it, tranſcribe into this chapter the whole of what has been ſaid upon the morality of the goſpel, by the author of *The internal evidence of Chriſtianity*; becauſe it perfectly agrees with my own opinion, and becauſe it is impoſſible to ſay the ſame things ſo well. This acute obſerver of human nature, and, as I believe, ſincere convert to Chriſtianity, appears to me to have made out ſatisfactorily the two following poſitions, viz.

I. That the goſpel omits ſome qualities, which have uſually engaged the praiſes and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effects, have been prejudicial to human happineſs.

II. That the goſpel has brought forwards ſome virtues, which poſſeſs the higheſt in-

take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke alſo; and whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain; love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you." This certainly is not common place morality. It is very original. It ſhews at leaſt (and it is for this purpoſe we produce it) that no two things can be more different than the Heroic and the Chriſtian character.

Now the author, to whom I refer, has not only remarked this difference more ſtrongly than any preceding writer, but has proved, in contradiction to firſt impreſſions, to popular opinion, to the encomiums of orators and poets, and even to the ſuffrages of hiſtorians and moraliſts, that the latter character poſſeſſes the moſt of true worth, both as being moſt difficult either to be acquired or ſuſtained, and as contributing moſt to the happineſs and tranquillity of ſocial life. The ſtate of his argument is as follows:

I. If

I. If this diſpoſition were univerſal, the caſe is clear: the world would be a ſociety of friends. Whereas, if the other diſpoſition were univerſal, it would produce a ſcene of univerſal contention. The world could not hold a generation of ſuch men.

II. If, what is the fact, the diſpoſition be partial; if a few be actuated by it, amongſt a multitude who are not; in whatever degree it does prevail, in the ſame proportion it prevents, allays, and terminates quarrels, the great diſturbers of human happineſs, and the great ſources of human miſery, ſo far as man's happineſs and miſery depend upon man. Without this diſpoſition enmities muſt not only be frequent, but, once begun, muſt be eternal; for each retaliation being a freſh injury, and, conſequently, requiring a freſh *ſatisfaction*, no period can be aſſigned to the reciprocation of affronts, and to the progreſs of hatred, but that which cloſes the lives, or at leaſt the intercourſe, of the parties.

I would only add to theſe obſervations,

that, although the former of the two characters above deſcribed may be occaſionally uſeful; although, perhaps, a great general, or a great ſtateſman, may be formed by it, and theſe may be inſtruments of important benefits to mankind, yet is this nothing more than what is true of many qualities, which are acknowledged to be vicious. *Envy* is a quality of this ſort. I know not a ſtronger ſtimulus to exertion. Many a ſcholar, many an artiſt, many a ſoldier, has been produced by it. Nevertheleſs, ſince in its general effects it is noxious, it is properly condemned, certainly is not praiſed, by ſober moraliſts.

It was a portion of the ſame character as that we are defending, or rather of his love of the ſame character, which our Saviour diſplayed, in his repeated correction of the ambition of his diſciples; his frequent admonitions, that greatneſs with them was to conſiſt in humility; his cenſure of that love of diſtinction, and greedineſs of ſuperiority, which the chief perſons amongſt his countrymen

trymen were wont, on all occaſions, great and little, to betray. " They (the ſcribes and phariſees) love the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts, and the chief ſeats in the ſynagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren; and call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called maſters, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt; but he that is greateſt among *you* ſhall be your ſervant, and whoſoever ſhall exalt himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that ſhall humble himſelf ſhall be exalted*." I make no farther remark upon theſe paſſages, (becauſe they are, in truth, only a repetition of the doctrine, different expreſſions of the principle, which we have already ſtated) except that ſome of the paſſages, eſpecially our Lord's advice to the gueſts at an entertainment, (Luke xiv. 7.) ſeem to extend the rule to what we call

* Matt. xxiii. 6. See alſo Mark xii. 39. Luke xx. 43. xiv. 7.

manners; which was both regular in point of conſiſtency, and not ſo much beneath the dignity of our Lord's miſſion as may at firſt ſight be ſuppoſed, for bad manners are bad morals.

It is ſufficiently apparent, that the precepts we have recited, or rather the diſpoſition which theſe precepts inculcate, relate to perſonal conduct from perſonal motives; to caſes in which men act from impulſe, for themſelves, and from themſelves. When it comes to be conſidered, what is neceſſary to be done, for the ſake of the public, and out of a regard to the general welfare, (which conſideration, for the moſt part, ought excluſively to govern the duties of men in public ſtations) it comes to a caſe to which the rules do not belong. This diſtinction is plain; and, if it were leſs ſo, the conſequence would not be much felt, for it is very ſeldom that, in the intercourſe of private life, men act with public views. The perſonal motives, from which they do act, the rule regulates.

The preference of the patient to the heroic character, which we have here noticed, and which the reader will find explained at large in the work to which we have referred him, is a peculiarity in the Chriſtian inſtitution, which I propoſe as an argument of wiſdom very much beyond the ſituation and natural character of the perſon who delivered it.

II. A *ſecond* argument, drawn from the morality of the New Teſtament, is the ſtreſs which is laid by our Saviour upon the regulation of the thoughts. And I place this conſideration next to the other, becauſe they are connected. The other related to the malicious paſſions; this to the voluptuous. Together they comprehend the whole character.

"Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, &c.—— Theſe are the things which defile a man." Mat. xv. 19.

"Wo unto you ſcribes and phariſees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter, but *within* they are full of extortion and exceſs.—Ye are like unto whited ſepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanneſs; even ſo ye alſo outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocriſy and iniquity. Mat. xxiii. 25. 27.

And more particularly that ſtrong expreſſion, (Mat. v. 28.) "Whoſoever looketh on a woman, to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind, but that the propenſities of our nature muſt be ſubjected to regulation; but the queſtion is, *where* the check ought to be placed, upon the thought, or only upon action. In this queſtion, our Saviour, in the texts here quoted, has pronounced a deciſive judgement. He makes the control

of thought eſſential. Internal purity with him is every thing. Now I contend that this is the only diſcipline which can ſucceed: in other words, that a moral ſyſtem, which prohibits actions, but leaves the thoughts at liberty, will be ineffectual, and is therefore unwiſe. I know not how to go about the proof of a point, which depends upon experience, and upon a knowledge of the human conſtitution, better than by citing the judgement of perſons, who appear to have given great attention to the ſubject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, ſpéaking of this very declaration of our Saviour, "Whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," and underſtanding it, as we do, to contain an injunction to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont to ſay, that "our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Haller, who has recorded this ſaying of Boerhaave's, adds to it the following remarks of his own *: "It did not eſcape the obſer-

* Letters to his Daughter.

vation of our Saviour, that the rejection of any evil thoughts was the beſt defence againſt vice; for when a debauched perſon fills his imagination with impure pictures, the licentious ideas which he recalls, fail not to ſtimulate his deſires with a degree of violence which he cannot reſiſt. This will be followed by gratification, unleſs ſome external obſtacle ſhould prevent him from the commiſſion of a ſin, which he had internally reſolved on." "Every moment of time (ſays our author) that is ſpent in meditations upon ſin, increaſes the power of the dangerous object which has poſſeſſed our imagination." I ſuppoſe theſe reflections will be generally aſſented to.

III. Thirdly, had a teacher of morality been aſked concerning a general principle of conduct, and for a ſhort rule of life; and had he inſtructed the perſon who conſulted him "conſtantly to refer his actions to what he believed to be the will of his Creator, and conſtantly to have in view, not his own intereſt and gratification alone, but the

the happineſs and comfort of thoſe about him," he would have been thought I doubt not, in any age of the world, and in any even the moſt improved ſtate of morals, to have delivered a judicious anſwer; becauſe, by the firſt direction, he ſuggeſted the only motive which acts ſteadily and uniformly, in ſight and out of ſight, in familiar occurrences and under preſſing temptations; and in the ſecond, he corrected, what, of all tendencies in the human character, ſtands moſt in need of correction, *ſelfiſhneſs*, or a contempt of other men's conveniency and ſatisfaction. In eſtimating the value of a moral-rule, we are to have regard, not only to the particular duty, but the general ſpirit; not only to what it directs us to do, but to the character which a compliance with its direction is likely to form in us. So, in the preſent inſtance, the rule here recited will never fail to make him who obeys it *conſiderate*, not only of the rights, but of the feelings of other men, bodily and mental, in great matters and in ſmall; of the eaſe, the accommodation, the ſelf-complacency

cency of all with whom he has any concern, eſpecially of all who are in his power, or dependent upon his will.

Now what, in the moſt applauded philoſopher of the moſt enlightened age of the world, would have been deemed worthy of his wiſdom, and of his character, to ſay, our Saviour hath ſaid, and upon juſt ſuch an occaſion as that which we have feigned.

" Then one of them, which was a lawyer, aſked him a queſtion, tempting him, and ſaying, Maſter, which is the great commandment in the law? Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind; this is the firſt and great commandment: and the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf: on theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Mat. xxii. 35—40.

The ſecond precept occurs in St. Matthew, on another occaſion ſimilar to this

(xix.

(xix. 16.), and both of them upon a third ſimilar occaſion in Luke (x. 27). In theſe two latter inſtances, the queſtion propoſed was, "What ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Upon all theſe occaſions, I conſider the words of our Saviour as expreſſing preciſely the ſame thing as what I have put into the mouth of the moral philoſopher. Nor do I think that it detracts much from the merit of the anſwer, that theſe precepts are extant in the Moſaic code: for his laying his finger, if I may ſo ſay, upon theſe precepts; his drawing them out from the reſt of that voluminous inſtitution; his ſtating of them, not ſimply amongſt the number, but as the greateſt and the ſum of all the others; in a word, his propoſing of them to his hearers for their rule and principle, was our Saviour's own.

And what our Saviour had ſaid upon the ſubject, appears to me to have *fixed* the ſentiment amongſt his followers.

St.

St. Paul has it expreſsly, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf *;" and again, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf †."

St. John, in like manner, "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo ‡."

St. Peter, not very differently, "Seeing that ye have purified your ſouls in obeying the truth, through the ſpirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, ſee that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently §."

And it is ſo well known, as to require no citations to verify it, that this love, or charity, or, in other words, regard to the welfare of others, runs in various forms through all the preceptive parts of the apo-

* Rom. xiii. 7. † Gal. v. 14.
‡ 1 John iv. 21. § 1 Pet. i. 22.

ſtolic

ſtolic writings. It is the theme of all their exhortations, that with which their morality begins and ends, from which all their details and enumerations ſet out, and into which they return.

And that this temper, for ſome time at leaſt, deſcended in its purity to ſucceeding Chriſtians, is atteſted by one of the earlieſt and beſt of the remaining writings of the apoſtolical fathers, the epiſtle of the Roman Clement. The meekneſs of the Chriſtian character reigns throughout the whole of that excellent piece. The occaſion called for it. It was to compoſe the diſſenſions of the church of Corinth. And the venerable hearer of the apoſtles does not fall ſhort, in the diſplay of this principle, of the fineſt paſſages of their writings. He calls to the remembrance of the Corinthian church its former character, in which "ye were all of you (he tells them) humble-minded, not boaſting of any thing, deſiring rather to be ſubject than to govern, to give than to receive, being content with the portion God had

had diſpenſed to you, and hearkening diligently to his word; ye were enlarged in your bowels, having his ſufferings always before your eyes. Ye contended day and night for the whole brotherhood, that with compaſſion and a good conſcience the number of his elect might be ſaved. Ye were ſincere, and without offence, towards each other. Ye bewailed every one his neighbour's ſins, eſteeming their defects your own*." His prayer for them was for the "return of peace, long ſuffering, and patience†." And his advice to thoſe, who might have been the occaſion of difference in the ſociety, is conceived in the true ſpirit, and with a perfect knowledge, of the Chriſtian character. "Who is there among you that is generous? Who that is compaſſionate? Who that has any charity? Let him ſay, if this ſedition, this contention, and theſe ſchiſms, be upon my account, I am ready to depart, to go away whitherſoever ye pleaſe, and do whatſoever ye ſhall command

* Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 2. Abp. Wake's Tranſlation.
† Ib. c. 58.

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me, only let the flock of Chriſt be in peace, with the elders who are ſet over it. He that ſhall do this, ſhall get to himſelf a very great honour in the Lord; and there is no place but what will be ready to receive him, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulneſs thereof. Theſe things they, who have their converſation towards God, not to be repented of, both have done, and will always be ready to do*."

This ſacred principle, this earneſt recommendation of forbearance, lenity, and forgiveneſs, mixes with all the writings of that age. There are more quotations in the apoſtolical fathers, of texts which relate to theſe points, than of any other. Chriſt's ſayings had ſtruck them. "Not rendering (ſaid Polycarp, the diſciple of John) evil for evil, or railing for railing, or ſtriking for ſtriking, or curſing for curſing †." Again, ſpeaking of ſome whoſe behaviour had given great offence, "Be ye moderate (ſays he) upon this occaſion, and look not upon ſuch

* Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 54. † Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. 2.

as

as enemies, but call them back as ſuffering and erring members, that ye ſave your whole body *."

"Be ye mild at their anger (ſaith Ignatius, the companion of Polycarp), humble at their boaſtings, to their blaſphemies return your prayers, to their error your firmneſs in the faith; when they are cruel, be ye gentle: not endeavouring to imitate their ways, let us be their brethren in all kindneſs and moderation; but let us be followers of the Lord, for who was ever more unjuſtly uſed, more deſtitute, more deſpiſed?"

IV. A fourth quality, by which the morality of the goſpel is diſtinguiſhed, is the excluſion of regard to fame and reputation.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be ſeen of them, otherwiſe ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven †."

* Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. 11. † Mat. vi. 1.

"When

"When thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut the door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly*."

And the rule, by parity of reaſon, is extended to all other virtues.

I do not think, that either in theſe, or in any other paſſage of the New Teſtament, the purſuit of fame is ſtated as a vice; it is only ſaid that an action, to be virtuous, muſt be independent of it. I would alſo obſerve, that it is not publicity, but oſtentation, which is prohibited; not the mode, but the motive, of the action, which is regulated. A good man will prefer that mode, as well as thoſe objects of his beneficence, by which he can produce the greateſt effect; and the view of this purpoſe may dictate ſometimes publication, and ſometimes concealment. Either the one or the other may be the *mode* of

* Mat. vi. 6.

the action, according as the end to be promoted by it appears to require. But from the *motive*, the reputation of the deed, and the fruits and advantage of that reputation to ourſelves, muſt be ſhut out, or, in whatever proportion they are not ſo, the action in that proportion fails of being virtuous.

This excluſion of regard to human opinion, is a difference, not ſo much in the duties, to which the teachers of virtue would perſuade mankind, as in the manner and topics of perſuaſion. And in this view the difference is great. When *we* ſet about to give advice, our lectures are full of the advantages of character, of the regard that is due to appearances and to opinion; of what the world, eſpecially of what the good or great, will think and ſay; of the value of public eſteem, and of the qualities by which men acquire it. Widely different from this was our Saviour's inſtruction; and the difference was founded upon the beſt reaſons. For, however the care of reputation, the authority of public opinion, or even of the

opinion

opinion of good men, the ſatisfaction of being well received and well thought of, the benefit of being known and diſtinguiſhed, are topics to which we are fain to have recourſe in our exhortations, the true virtue is that which diſcards theſe conſiderations abſolutely, and which retires from them all to the ſingle internal purpoſe of pleaſing God. This at leaſt was the virtue which our Saviour taught. And in teaching of this, he not only confined the views of his followers to the proper meaſure and principle of human duty, but acted in conſiſtency with his office as a monitor from heaven.

Next to what our Saviour taught, may be conſidered the manner of his teaching; which was extremely peculiar, yet, I think, preciſely adapted to the peculiarity of his character and ſituation. His leſſons did not conſiſt of diſquiſitions; of any thing like moral eſſays, or like ſermons, or like ſet treatiſes upon the ſeveral points which he mentioned. When he delivered a precept,

it was ſeldom that he added any proof or argument; ſtill ſeldomer, that he accompanied it with, what all precepts require, limitations and diſtinctions. His inſtructions were conceived in ſhort emphatic ſententious rules, in occaſional reflections, or in round maxims. I do not think that this was a natural, or would have been a proper method for a philoſopher or a moraliſt; or that it is a method which can be ſucceſſfully imitated by us. But I contend that it was ſuitable to the character which Chriſt aſſumed, and to the ſituation in which, as a teacher, he was placed. He produced himſelf as a meſſenger from God. He put the truth of what he taught upon authority*. In the choice, therefore, of his mode of teaching, the purpoſe by him to be conſulted was *impreſſion*; becauſe conviction, which forms the principal end of our diſcourſes, was to ariſe in the minds of his fol-

* *I* ſay unto you, Swear not at all; *I* ſay unto you, Reſiſt not evil; *I* ſay unto you, Love your enemies †.

† Mat. v. 34, 39, 44.

lowers

lowers from a different ſource, from their reſpect to his perſon and authority. Now, for the purpoſe of impreſſion ſingly and excluſively (I repeat again, that we are not here to conſider the convincing of the underſtanding) I know nothing which would have ſo great force as ſtrong ponderous maxims, frequently urged, and frequently brought back to the thoughts of the hearers. I know nothing that could in this view be ſaid better, than " Do unto others as ye would that others ſhould do unto you: the firſt and great commandment is, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God; and the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." It muſt alſo be remembered, that our Lord's miniſtry, upon the ſuppoſition either of one year or of three, compared with his work, was of ſhort duration; that, within this time, he had many places to viſit, various audiences to addreſs; that his perſon was generally beſieged by crowds of followers; that he was, ſometimes, driven away from the place where he was teaching by perſecution, and, at other times, thought

fit to withdraw himſelf from the commotions of the populace. Under theſe circumſtances nothing appears to have been ſo practicable, or likely to be ſo efficacious, as leaving, wherever he came, conciſe leſſons of duty. Theſe circumſtances at leaſt ſhew the neceſſity he was under of compriſing what he delivered within a ſmall compaſs. In particular, his ſermon upon the mount ought always to be conſidered with a view to theſe obſervations. The queſtion is not, whether a fuller, a more accurate, a more ſyſtematic, or a more argumentative diſcourſe upon morals might not have been pronounced; but whether more could have been ſaid in the ſame room, better adapted to the exigencies of the hearers, or better calculated for the purpoſe of impreſſion? Seen in this light, it hath always appeared to me to be admirable. Dr. Lardner thought that this diſcourſe was made up of what Chriſt had ſaid at different times, and upon different occaſions, ſeveral of which occaſions are noticed in St. Luke's narrative. I can perceive no reaſon for this opinion. I believe

believe that our Lotd delivered this diſcourſe at one time and place, in the manner related by St. Matthew, and that he repeated the ſame rules and maxims at different times, as opportunity or occaſion ſuggeſted; that they were often in his mouth, were repeated to different audiences, and in various converſations.

It is incidental to this mode of moral inſtruction, which proceeds not by proof but upon authority, not by diſquiſition but by precept, that the rules will be conceived in abſolute terms, leaving the application, and the diſtinctions that attend it, to the reaſon of the hearer. It is likewiſe to be expected, that they will be delivered in terms, by ſo much the more forcible and energetic, as they have to encounter natural or general propenſities. It is further alſo to be remarked, that many of thoſe ſtrong inſtances, which appear in our Lord's ſermon, ſuch as "If any man will ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo; If any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away

thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo: Whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain: though they appear in the form of ſpecific precepts, are intended as deſcriptive of diſpoſition and character. A ſpecific compliance with the precepts would be of little value, but the diſpoſition which they inculcate is of the higheſt. He who ſhould content himſelf with waiting for the occaſion, and with literally obſerving the rule when the occaſion offered, would do nothing, or worſe than nothing; but he who conſiders the character and diſpoſition which is hereby inculcated, and places that diſpoſition before him as the model to which he ſhould bring his own, takes, perhaps, the beſt poſſible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the vices of his temper.

If it be ſaid that this diſpoſition is unattainable, I anſwer, ſo is all perfection; ought therefore a moraliſt to recommend imperfections? One excellency, however, of our Saviour's rules is, that they are either

either never miſtaken, or never ſo miſtaken as to do harm. I could feign a hundred caſes, in which the literal application of the rule, "of doing to others as we would that others ſhould do unto us," might miſlead us: but I never yet met with the man who was actually miſled by it. Notwithſtanding that our Lord bid his followers "not to reſiſt evil," and "to forgive the enemy who ſhould treſpaſs againſt them, not till ſeven times but till ſeventy times ſeven," the Chriſtian world has hitherto ſuffered little by too much placability or forbearance. I would repeat once more, what has already been twice remarked, that theſe rules were deſigned to regulate perſonal conduct from perſonal motives, and for this purpoſe alone.

I think that theſe obſervations will aſſiſt us greatly in placing our Saviour's conduct, as a moral teacher, in a proper point of view; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that to deliver moral diſquiſitions was no part of his deſign, to teach morality at all was only a ſub-

a ſubordinate part of it; his great buſineſs being to ſupply, what was much more wanting than leſſons of morality, ſtronger moral ſanctions, and clearer aſſurances of a future judgement*.

The *parables* of the New Teſtament are, many of them, ſuch as would have done honour to any book in the world; I do not

* Some appear to require a religious ſyſtem, or, in the books which profeſs to deliver that ſyſtem, minute directions for every caſe and occurrence that may ariſe. This, ſay they, is neceſſary to render a revelation perfect, eſpecially one which has for its object the regulation of human conduct. Now, how prolix, and yet how incomplete and unavailing, ſuch an attempt muſt have been, is proved by one notable example: "The Indoo and Muſſulman religion are inſtitutes of civil law, regulating the minuteſt queſtions both of property, and of all queſtions which come under the cognizance of the magiſtrate. And to what length details of this kind are neceſſarily carried, when once begun, may be underſtood from an anecdote of the Muſſulman code, which we have received from the moſt reſpectable authority, that not leſs than *ſeventy-five thouſand* traditional precepts have been promulgated." Hamilton's tranſlation of the Hedaya, or Guide.

mean

mean in ſtyle and diction, but in the choice of the ſubjects, in the ſtructure of the narratives, in the aptneſs, propriety, and force of the circumſtances woven into them; and in ſome, as that of the good Samaritan, the prodigal ſon, the phariſee and the publican, in an union of pathos and ſimplicity, which, in the beſt productions of human genius, is the fruit only of a much exerciſed and well-cultivated judgement.

The Lord's Prayer, for a ſucceſſion of ſolemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for ſuitableneſs to every condition, for ſufficiency, for conciſeneſs without obſcurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival.

From whence did theſe come? Whence had this man this wiſdom? Was our Saviour, in fact, a well-inſtructed philoſopher, whilſt he is repreſented to us as an illiterate peaſant? Or ſhall we ſay that ſome early Chriſtians of taſte and education compoſed theſe

theſe pieces, and aſcribed them to Chriſt? Beſide all other incredibilities in this account, I anſwer, with Dr. Jortin, that they *could not* do it. No ſpecimens of compoſition, which the Chriſtians of the firſt century have left us, authoriſe us to believe that they were equal to the taſk. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Chriſt, were to aſſiſt him in the undertaking, may be judged of from the traditions and writings of theirs which were the neareſt to that age. The whole collection of the Talmud is one continued proof, into what follies they fell whenever they left their Bible; and how little capable they were of furniſhing out ſuch leſſons as Chriſt delivered.

But there is ſtill another view, in which our Lord's diſcourſes deſerve to be conſidered; and that is, in their *negative* character, not in what they did, but in what they did not, contain. Under this head, the following reflections appear to me to poſſeſs ſome weight.

I. They exhibit no particular deſcription

of the inviſible world. The future happineſs of the good, and the miſery of the bad, which is all we want to be aſſured of, is directly and poſitively affirmed, and is repreſented by metaphors and compariſons, which were plainly intended as metaphors and compariſons, and as nothing more. As to the reſt, a ſolemn reſerve is maintained. The queſtion concerning the woman who had been married to ſeven brothers, "Whoſe ſhall ſhe be on the reſurrection?" was of a nature calculated to have drawn from Chriſt a more circumſtantial account of the ſtate of the human ſpecies in their future exiſtence. He cut ſhort, however, the enquiry by an anſwer, which at once rebuked intruding curioſity, and was agreeable to the beſt apprehenſions we are able to form upon the ſubject, viz. "That they who are accounted worthy of that reſurrection, ſhall be as the angels of God in heaven." I lay a ſtreſs upon this reſerve, becauſe it repels the ſuſpicion of enthuſiaſm; for enthuſiaſm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the

the departed, above all other ſubjects; and with a wild particularity. It is moreover a topic which is always liſtened to with greedineſs. The teacher, therefore, whoſe principal purpoſe is to draw upon himſelf attention, is ſure to be full of it. The Koran of Mahomet is half made up of it.

II. Our Lord enjoined no auſterities. He not only enjoined none as abſolute duties, but he recommended none as carrying men to a higher degree of divine favour. Place Chriſtianity, in this reſpect, by the ſide of all inſtitutions which have been founded in the fanaticiſm, either of their author, or of his firſt followers: or rather compare, in this reſpect, Chriſtianity as it came from Chriſt, with the ſame religion after it fell into other hands; with the extravagant merit very ſoon aſcribed to celibacy, ſolitude, voluntary poverty; with the rigours of an aſcetic, and the vows of a monaſtic life; the hair ſhirt, the watchings, the midnight prayers, the obmuteſcence, the gloom and morti-

mortification of religious orders, and of thoſe who aſpired to religious perfection.

III. Our Saviour uttered no impaſſioned devotion. There was no heat in his piety, or in the language in which he expreſſed it; no vehement or rapturous ejaculations, no violent urgency in his prayers. The Lord's prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expreſſions, of a deep indeed, but ſober piety. He never appears to have been worked up into any thing like that elation, or that emotion of ſpirits, which is occaſionally obſerved in moſt of thoſe, to whom the name of enthuſiaſt can in any degree be applied. I feel a reſpect for methodiſts, becauſe I believe that there is to be found amongſt them, much ſincere piety, and availing, though not always well-informed, Chriſtianity: yet I never attended a meeting of theirs, but I came away with the reflection, how different what I heard was from what I read; I do not mean in doctrine, with which,

which, at preſent, I have no concern, but in manner; how different from the calmneſs, the ſobriety, the good ſenſe, and, I may add, the ſtrength and authority, of our Lord's diſcourſes.

IV. It is very uſual with the human mind, to ſubſtitute forwardneſs and fervency in a particular cauſe, for the merit of general and regular morality; and it is natural, and politic alſo, in the leader of a ſect or party, to encourage ſuch a diſpoſition in his followers. Chriſt did not overlook this turn of thought: yet, though avowedly placing himſelf at the head of a new inſtitution, he notices it only to condemn it. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will ſay unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophefied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profeſs unto

unto you, I never knew you, depart from me, *ye that work iniquity* *." So far was the author of Chriſtianity from courting the attachment of his followers by any ſacrifice of principle, or by a condeſcenſion to the errors which even zeal in his ſervice might have inſpired! This was a proof both of ſincerity and judgement.

V. Nor, fifthly, did he fall in with any of the depraved faſhions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education. Bred up a Jew, under a religion extremely technical, in an age and amongſt a people more tenacious of the ceremonies than of any other part of that religion, he delivered an inſtitution, containing leſs of ritual, and that more ſimple, than is to be found in any religion, which ever prevailed amongſt mankind. We have known, I do allow, examples of an enthuſiaſm, which has ſwept away all external ordinances before it. But this ſpirit certainly did not dictate our Saviour's conduct, either in his treatment of

* Mat. vii. 21, 22.

the religion of his country, or in the formation of his own inſtitution. In both he diſplayed the ſoundneſs and moderation of his judgement. He cenſured an overſtrained ſcrupulouſneſs, or perhaps an affectation of ſcrupulouſneſs, about the Sabbath; but how did he cenſure it? not by contemning or decrying the inſtitution itſelf, but by declaring that "the ſabbath was made for man, not man for the ſabbath;" that is to ſay, that the ſabbath was to be ſubordinate to its purpoſe, and that that purpoſe was the real good of thoſe who were the ſubjects of the law. The ſame concerning the nicety of ſome of the phariſees, in paying tithes of the moſt trifling articles, accompanied with a neglect of juſtice, fidelity, and mercy. He finds fault with them for miſplacing their anxiety. He does not ſpeak diſreſpectfully of the law of tithes, or of their obſervance of it, but he aſſigns to each claſs of duties its proper ſtation in the ſcale of moral importance. All this might be expected perhaps from a well-inſtructed, cool, and judicious philoſopher, but was

not

not to be looked for from an illiterate Jew, certainly not from an impetuous enthuſiaſt.

VI. Nothing could be more quibbling, than were the comments and expoſitions of the Jewiſh doctors, at that time; nothing ſo puerile as their diſtinctions. Their evaſion of the fifth commandment, their expoſition of the law of oaths, are ſpecimens of the bad taſte in morals which then prevailed. Whereas in a numerous collection of our Saviour's apothegms, many of them referring to ſundry precepts of the Jewiſh law, there is not to be found one example of ſophiſtry, or of falſe ſubtlety, or of any thing approaching thereunto.

VII. The national temper of the Jews was intolerant, narrow-minded, and excluding. In Jeſus, on the contrary, whether we regard his leſſons or his example, we ſee not only benevolence, but benevolence the moſt enlarged and comprehenſive. In the parable of the good Samaritan, the very point of the ſtory is, that the perſon re-

lieved by him, was the national and religious enemy of his benefactor. Our Lord declared the equity of the divine administration, when he told the Jews (what, probably, they were ſurpriſed to hear) "That many ſhould come from the eaſt and weſt, and ſhould ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but that the children of the kingdom ſhould be caſt into outer darkneſs *." His reproof of the haſty zeal of his diſciples, who would needs call down fire from heaven to revenge an affront put upon their Maſter, ſhews the lenity of his character, and of his religion; and his opinion of the manner in which the moſt unreaſonable opponents ought to be treated, or at leaſt of the manner in which they ought not to be treated. The terms, in which his rebuke was conveyed, deſerve to be noticed:—"Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of †."

VIII. Laſtly, amongſt the negative quali-

* Mat. viii. 11. † Luke ix. 55.

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ties of our religion, as it came out of the hands of its founder and his apoſtles, we may reckon its complete abſtraction from all views either of eccleſiaſtical or civil policy; or, to meet a language much in faſhion with ſome men, from the politics either of prieſts or ſtateſmen. Chriſt's declaration, that "his kingdom was not of this world," recorded by John; his evaſion of the queſtion, whether it was lawful or not to give tribute unto Cæſar, mentioned by the three other evangeliſts; his reply to an application that was made to him, to interpoſe his authority in a queſtion of property, "Man, who made me a ruler or a judge over you?" aſcribed to him by St. Luke; his declining to exerciſe the office of a criminal judge in the caſe of the woman taken in adultery, as related by John, are all intelligible ſignifications of our Saviour's ſentiments upon this head. And with reſpect to *politics*, in the uſual ſenſe of that word, or diſcuſſions concerning different forms of government, Chriſtianity declines every queſtion upon the ſubject. Whilſt politicians are diſputing

about monarchies, ariſtocracies, and republics, the Goſpel is alike applicable, uſeful, and friendly to them all; inaſmuch as, 1ſt, it tends to make men virtuous, and as it is eaſier to govern good men than bad men under any conſtitution: as, 2dly, it ſtates obedience to government in ordinary caſes, to be not merely a ſubmiſſion to force, but a duty of conſcience: as, 3dly, it induces diſpoſitions favourable to public tranquillity, a Chriſtian's chief care being to paſs quietly through this world to a better: as, 4thly, it prays for communities, and for the governors of communities, of whatever deſcription or denomination they be, with a ſolicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they poſſeſs upon human happineſs. All which, in my opinion, is juſt as it ſhould be. Had there been more to be found in ſcripture of a political nature, or convertible to political purpoſes, the worſt uſe would have been made of it, on whichever ſide it ſeemed to lie.

When, therefore, we conſider Chriſt as a moral

moral teacher (remembering that this was only a ſecondary part of his office; and that morality, by the nature of the ſubject, does not admit of diſcovery, properly ſo called); when we conſider either what he taught, or what he did not teach, either the ſubſtance or the manner of his inſtruction; his preference of ſolid to popular virtues, of a character which is commonly deſpiſed, to a character which is univerſally extolled; his placing, in our licentious vices, the check in the right place, viz. upon the thoughts; his collecting of human duty into two well-deviſed rules, his repetition of theſe rules, the ſtreſs he laid upon them, eſpecially in compariſon with poſitive duties, and his fixing thereby the ſentiments of his followers; his excluſion of all regard to reputation in our devotion and alms, and, by parity of reaſon, in our other virtues: when we conſider that his inſtructions were delivered in a form calculated for impreſſion, the preciſe purpoſe in his ſituation to be conſulted; and that they were illuſtrated by parables, the choice and ſtructure of which

would have been admired in any compoſition whatever: when we obſerve him free from the uſual ſymptoms of enthuſiaſm, heat and vehemence in devotion, auſterity in inſtitutions, and a wild particularity in the deſcriptions of a future ſtate; free alſo from the depravities of his age and country; without ſuperſtition amongſt the moſt ſuperſtitious of men, yet not decrying poſitive diſtinctions or external obſervances, but ſoberly recalling them to the principle of their eſtabliſhment, and to their place in the ſcale of human duties; without ſophiſtry or trifling, amidſt teachers remarkable for nothing ſo much, as frivolous ſubtleties and quibbling expoſitions; candid and liberal in his judgement of the reſt of mankind, although belonging to a people, who affected a ſeparate claim to divine favour, and, in conſequence of that opinion, prone to uncharitableneſs, partiality, and reſtriction: when we find, in his religion, no ſcheme of building up a hierarchy, or of miniſtering to the views of human governments: in a word, when we compare Chriſtianity,

tianity, as it came from its author, either with other religions, or with itſelf in other hands, the moſt reluctant underſtanding will be induced to acknowledge the probity, I think alſo the good ſenſe, of thoſe to whom it owes its origin; and that ſome regard is due to the teſtimony of ſuch men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God; and when they appeal, for the truth of their aſſertion, to miracles which they wrought, or which they ſaw.

Perhaps the qualities which we obſerve in the religion, may be thought to prove ſomething more. They would have been extraordinary, had the religion come from any perſon; from the perſon from whom it did come, they are exceedingly ſo. What was Jeſus in external appearance? A Jewiſh peaſant, the ſon of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote province of Paleſtine, until the time that he produced himſelf in his public character. He had no maſter to inſtruct or prompt him.

He had read no books, but the works of Moſes and the Prophets. He had viſited no poliſhed cities. He had received no leſſons from Socrates or Plato; nothing to form in him a taſte or judgement, different from that of the reſt of his countrymen, and of perſons of the ſame rank of life with himſelf. Suppoſing it to be true, which it is not, that all his points of morality might be picked out of Greek and Roman writings, they were writings which *he* had never ſeen. Suppoſing them to be no more than what ſome or other had taught in various times and places, he could not collect them together.

Who were his coadjutors in the undertaking, the perſons into whoſe hands the religion came after his death? A few fiſhermen upon the lake of Tiberias, perſons juſt as uneducated, and, for the purpoſe of framing rules of morality, as unpromiſing, as himſelf. Suppoſe the miſſion to be real, all this is accounted for; the unſuitableneſs of the authors to the production, of the cha-

racters to the undertaking, no longer ſurpriſes us; but, without *reality*, it is very difficult to explain, how ſuch a ſyſtem ſhould proceed from ſuch perſons. Chriſt was not like any other carpenter; the apoſtles were not like any other fiſhermen.

But the ſubject is not exhauſted by theſe obſervations. That portion of it, which is moſt reducible to points of argument, has been ſtated, and, I truſt, truly. There are, however, ſome topics, of a more diffuſe nature, which yet deſerve to be propoſed to the reader's attention.

The *character of Chriſt* is a part of the morality of the Goſpel: one ſtrong obſervation upon which is, that, neither as repreſented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he charged with any perſonal vice. This remark is as old as Origen:—"Though innumerable lies and calumnies had been forged againſt the venerable Jeſus, none had dared to charge him with an intemperance."

temperance*." Not a reflection upon his moral character, not an imputation or ſuſpicion of any offence againſt purity and chaſtity, appears for five hundred years after his birth. This faultleſſneſs is more peculiar than we are apt to imagine. Some ſtain pollutes the morals or the morality of almoſt every other teacher, and of every other lawgiver †. Zeno the ſtoic, and Diogenes the cynic, fell into the fouleſt impurities; of which alſo Socrates himſelf was more than ſuſpected. Solon forbade unnatural crimes to ſlaves. Lycurgus tolerated theft as a part of education. Plato recommended a community of women. Ariſtotle maintained the general right of making war upon Barbarians. The elder Cato was remarkable for the ill uſage of his ſlaves. The younger gave up the perſon of his wife. One looſe principle is found in almoſt all the Pagan moraliſts; is diſtinctly, however, perceived in the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero,

* Or. Ep. Celſ. l. 3. num. 36. ed. Bened.

† See many inſtances collected by Grotius de Ver. in the notes to his ſecond book, p. 116. Pocock's edition.

Seneca,

Seneca, Epictetus, and that is, the allowing, and even the recommending to their diſciples, a compliance with the religion, and with the religious rites, of every country into which they came. In ſpeaking of the founders of new inſtitutions, we cannot forget Mahomet. His licentious tranſgreſſions of his own licentious rules; his abuſe of the character which he aſſumed, and of the power which he had acquired, for the purpoſes of perſonal and privileged indulgence; his avowed claim of a ſpecial permiſſion from heaven of unlimited ſenſuality, is known to every reader, as it is confeſſed by every writer, of the Moſlem ſtory.

Secondly, in the hiſtories which are left us of Jeſus Chriſt, although very ſhort, and although dealing in narrative, and not in obſervation or panegyric, we perceive, beſide the abſence of every appearance of vice, traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildneſs, patience, prudence. I ſpeak of *traces* of theſe qualities, becauſe the qualities themſelves are to be collected from incidents; inaſmuch

inaſmuch as the terms are never uſed of Chriſt in the goſpels, nor is any formal character of him drawn in any part of the New Teſtament.

Thus we ſee the *devoutneſs* of his mind, in his frequent retirement to ſolitary prayer*; in his habitual giving of thanks†; in his reference of the beauties and operations of nature to the bounty of providence‡; in his earneſt addreſſes to his Father, more particularly that ſhort but ſolemn one before the raiſing of Lazarus from the dead§; and in the deep piety of his behaviour in the garden, on the laſt evening of his life‖; his *humility*, in his conſtant reproof of contentions for ſuperiority¶: the *benignity* and affectionateneſs of his temper, in his kindneſs to children**, in the tears which he ſhed

* Mat. xiv. 23. ix. 28. xxvi. 36.

† Mat. xi. 25. Mark viii. 6. John vi. 23. Luke xxii. 17.

‡ Mat. vi. 26. 28.

§ John xi. 41.

‖ Mat. xxvi. 36—47.

¶ Mark ix. 33. ** Mark x. 16.

over

over his falling country*, and upon the death of his friend†; in his noticing of the widow's mite‡; in his parables of the good Samaritan, of the ungrateful ſervant, and of the phariſee and publican, of which parables no one but a man of humanity could have been the author: the *mildneſs* and lenity of his character is diſcovered, in his rebuke of the forward zeal of his diſciples at the Samaritan village§; in his expoſtulation with Pilate‖; in his prayer for his enemies at the moment of his ſuffering¶, which, though it has been ſince very properly and frequently imitated, was then, I apprehend, new. His *prudence* is diſcerned, where prudence is moſt wanted, in his conduct upon trying occaſions, and in anſwers to artful queſtions. Of theſe the following are examples:—His withdrawing, in various inſtances, from the firſt ſymptoms of tumult**, and with the expreſs care, as appears from

* Luke xix. 41. † John xi. 35. ‡ Mark xii. 42.
§ Luke ix. 55. ‖ John xix. 11. ¶ Luke xxiii. 34.
** Mat. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15. 16. John v. 13. vi. 15.

St.

St. Matthew*, of carrying on his miniſtry in quietneſs; his declining of every ſpecies of interference with the civil affairs of the country, which diſpoſition is manifeſted by his behaviour in the caſe of the woman caught in adultery †, and in his repulſe of the application which was made to him, to interpoſe his deciſion about a diſputed inheritance ‡: his judicious, yet, as it ſhould ſeem, unprepared anſwers, will be confeſſed in the caſe of the Roman tribute §; in the difficulty concerning the interfering relations of a future ſtate, as propoſed to him in the inſtance of a woman who had married ſeven brethren||; and, more eſpecially, in his reply to thoſe who demanded from him an explanation of the authority by which he acted, which reply conſiſted, in propounding a queſtion to them, ſituated between the very difficulties, into which they were inſidiouſly endeavouring to draw *him* ¶.

Our Saviour's leſſons, beſide what has al-

* Mat. xii. 19. † John viii. 1. ‡ Luke xii. 14.
§ Mat. xxii. 19. || Ib. 28. ¶ xxi. 23 et ſeq.

ready

ready been remarked in them, touch, and that oftentimes by very affecting repreſentations, upon ſome of the moſt intereſting topics of human duty, and of human meditation; upon the principles, by which the deciſions of the laſt day will be regulated *; upon the ſuperior, or rather the ſupreme, importance of religion †; upon penitence, by the moſt preſſing calls, and the moſt encouraging invitations ‡; upon ſelf-denial §, watchfulneſs ‖, placability ¶, confidence in God **, the value of ſpiritual, that is, of mental worſhip ††, the neceſſity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the ſpirit and principle of the law, inſtead of ſeeking for evaſions in a technical conſtruction of its terms ‡‡.

* Mat. xxv. 31 et ſeq.

† Mark viii. 35. Mat. vi. 31—33. Luke xii. 16. 21. —4, 5.

‡ Luke xv.

§ Mat. v. 29.

‖ Mark xiii. 37. Mat. xxiv. 42.—xxv. 13.

¶ Luke xvii. 4. Mat. xviii. 33.

** Mat. v. 25—30.

†† John iv. 23, 24. ‡‡ Mat. v. 11.

If we extend our argument to other parts of the New Teſtament, we may offer, as amongſt the beſt and ſhorteſt rules of life, or, which is the ſame thing, deſcriptions of virtue, that have ever been delivered, the following paſſages:

"Pure religion, and undefiled, before God, and the Father, is this; to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world *."

"Now the end of the commandment is, charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned †.

"For the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world ‡."

Enumerations of virtues and vices, and

* James i. 27. † 1 Tim. i. 5. ‡ Tit. ii. 11, 12.

thoſe

thoſe ſufficiently accurate, and unqueſtionably juſt, are given by St. Paul to his converts in three ſeveral epiſtles *.

The relative duties of huſbands and wives, of parents and children, of maſters and ſervants, of Chriſtian teachers and their flocks, of governors and their ſubjects, are ſet forth by the ſame writer †, not indeed with the copiouſneſs, the detail, or the diſtinctneſs, of a moraliſt, who ſhould, in theſe days, ſit down to write chapters upon the ſubject, but with the leading rules and principles in each; and, above all, with truth, and with authority.

Laſtly, the whole volume of the New Teſtament is replete with *piety*; with, what were almoſt unknown to heathen moraliſts, *devotional virtues*, the moſt profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual ſenſe of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in

* Gal. v. 19. Col. iii. 12. 1 Cor. xiii.

† Eph. v. 33. vi. 1. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7. Rom. xiii.

the final reſult of his councils and diſpenſations, a diſpoſition to reſort, upon all occaſions, to his mercy, for the ſupply of human wants, for aſſiſtance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of ſin.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The candour of the writers of the New Teſtament.

I MAKE this candour to conſiſt, in their putting down many paſſages, and noticing many circumſtances, which no writer whatever was likely to have forged; and which no writer would have choſen to appear in his book, who had been careful to preſent the ſtory in the moſt unexceptionable form, or who had thought himſelf at liberty to carve and mould the particulars of that ſtory, according to his choice, or according to his judgement of the effect.

A ſtrong and well-known example of the fairneſs of the evangeliſts, offers itſelf in their account of Chriſt's reſurrection, namely, in their unanimouſly ſtating, that, after he was riſen, he appeared to his diſciples alone. I do not mean that they have uſed

the excluſive word *alone*; but that all the inſtances which they have recorded of his appearance, are inſtances of appearance to his diſciples; that their reaſonings upon it, and alluſions to it, are confined to this ſuppoſition; and that, by one of them, Peter is made to ſay, "Him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhewed him openly, not to all the people, but to witneſſes choſen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead *." The commoneſt underſtanding muſt have perceived, that the hiſtory of the reſurrection would have come with more advantage, if they had related that Jeſus appeared, after he was riſen, to his foes as well as his friends, to the ſcribes and phariſees, the Jewiſh council, and the Roman governor: or even if they had aſſerted the public appearance of Chriſt in general unqualified terms, without noticing, as they have done, the preſence of his diſciples upon each occaſion, and noticing it in ſuch a manner as to lead their

* Acts x. 40. 41.

readers

readers to ſuppoſe that none but diſciples were preſent. They *could* have repreſented it one way as well as the other. And if their point had been, to have the religion believed, whether true or falſe; if they had fabricated the ſtory *ab initio*, or if they had been diſpoſed, either to have delivered their teſtimony as witneſſes, or to have worked up their materials and information as hiſtorians, in ſuch a manner as to render their narrative as ſpecious and unobjectionable as they could; in a word, if they had thought of any thing but of the truth of the caſe, as they underſtood and believed it; they would, in their account of Chriſt's ſeveral appearances after his reſurrection, at leaſt have omitted this reſtriction. At this diſtance of time, the account as we have it is perhaps more credible than it would have been the other way; becauſe this manifeſtation of the hiſtorian's candour, is of more advantage to their teſtimony, than the difference in the circumſtances of the account would have been to the nature of the evidence. But this is an effect which the evangeliſts would not fore-

ſee; and I think that it was by no means the caſe at the time when the books were compoſed.

Mr. Gibbon has argued for the genuineneſs of the Koran, from the confeſſions which it contains, to the apparent diſadvantage of the Mahometan cauſe *. The ſame defence vindicates the genuineneſs of our Goſpels, and without prejudice to the cauſe at all.

There are ſome other inſtances in which the evangeliſts honeſtly relate what, they muſt have perceived, would make againſt them.

Of this kind is John the Baptiſt's meſſage, preſerved by St. Matthew and St. Luke, (xi. 2. vii. 18.) "Now when John had heard in the priſon the works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we

* Vol. ix. c. 50, note 96.

for

for another?" To confeſs, ſtill more to ſtate, that John the Baptiſt had his doubts concerning the character of Jeſus, could not but afford a handle to cavil and objection. But truth, like honeſty, neglects appearances. The ſame obſervation, perhaps, holds concerning the apoſtacy of Judas *.

* I had once placed amongſt theſe examples of fair conceſſion, the remarkable words of St. Matthew, in his account of Chriſt's appearance upon the Galilean mountain: "And when they ſaw him they worſhipped him, *but ſome doubted* *." I have ſince, however, been convinced, by what is obſerved concerning this paſſage in Dr. Townſhend's diſcourſe † upon the reſurrection, that the tranſaction, as related by St. Matthew, was really this: "Chriſt appeared firſt *at a diſtance*; the greater part of the company, the moment they ſaw him, worſhipped, but ſome, as yet, *i. e.* upon this firſt diſtant view of his perſon, doubted; whereupon Chriſt *came up* ‡ to them, and ſpake to them," &c.: that the doubt, therefore, was a doubt only at firſt, for a moment, and upon his being ſeen at a diſtance, and was afterwards diſpelled by his nearer approach, and by his entering into converſation with them.

* xxviii. 17. † Page 177.

‡ St. Matthew's words are, Και προσελθων ὁ Ιησους ελαλησεν αυτοις. This intimates, that, when he firſt appeared, it was at a diſtance, at leaſt from many of the ſpectators. Ib. p. 197.

John vi. 66. "From that time many of his diſciples went back, and walked no more with him." Was it the part of a writer, who dealt in ſuppreſſion and diſguiſe, to put down *this* anecdote?

Or this, which Matthew has preſerved, (xiii. 58.)? "He did not many mighty works there, becauſe of their unbelief."

Again, in the ſame evangeliſt (v. 17, 18.) "Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil; for, verily, I ſay unto you, till heaven and earth paſs, one jot, or one tittle, ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled." At the time the goſpels were written, the apparent tendency of Chriſt's miſſion was to diminiſh the authority of the Moſaic code, and it was ſo conſidered by the Jews themſelves. It is very improbable, therefore, that, without the conſtraint of truth, Matthew ſhould have aſcribed a ſaying to Chriſt, which, *primo intuitu*, militated with the judgement of

of the age in which his goſpel was written. Marcion thought this text ſo objectionable, that he altered the words, ſo as to invert the ſenſe *.

Once more, Acts xxv. 19. "They brought none accuſation againſt him, of ſuch things, as I ſuppoſed, but had certain queſtions againſt him of their own ſuperſtition, and of one Jeſus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Nothing could be more in the character of a Roman governor than theſe words. But that is not preciſely the point I am concerned with. A mere panegyriſt, or a diſhoneſt narrator, would not have repreſented his cauſe, or have made a great magiſtrate repreſent it, in this manner, *i. e.* in terms not a little diſparaging, and beſpeaking, on his part, much unconcern and indifference about the matter. The ſame obſervation may be repeated of the ſpeech which is aſcribed to Gallio (Acts viii. 14.) "If it be a queſtion

* Lard. vol. xv. p. 422.

of

of words, and names, and of your law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of ſuch matters."

Laſtly, where do we diſcern a ſtronger mark of candour, or leſs diſpoſition to extol and magnify, than in the concluſion of the ſame hiſtory? in which the evangeliſt, after relating that Paul, upon his firſt arrival at Rome, preached to the Jews from morning until evening, adds, "And ſome believed the things which were ſpoken, and ſome believed not."

The following, I think, are paſſages which were very unlikely to have preſented themſelves to the mind of a forger or a fabuliſt.

Mat. xxi. 21. "Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye ſhall not only do this, which is done unto the fig-tree, but alſo, if ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea,

ſea, it ſhall be done; all things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, it ſhall be done*." It appears to me very improbable that theſe words ſhould have been put into Chriſt's mouth, if he had not actually ſpoken them. The term "faith," as here uſed, is perhaps rightly interpreted of confidence in that internal notice, by which the apoſtles were admoniſhed of their power to perform any particular miracle. And this expoſition renders the ſenſe of the text more eaſy. But the words, undoubtedly, in their obvious conſtruction, carry with them a difficulty, which no writer would have brought upon himſelf officiouſly.

Luke ix. 59. "And he ſaid unto another, Follow me; but he ſaid, Lord, ſuffer me, firſt, to go and bury my father. Jeſus ſaid unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God†" This anſwer, though very ex-

* See alſo xvii. 20. Luke xvii. 6.
† See alſo Mat. viii. 21.

preſſive

preſſive of the tranſcendent importance of religious concerns, was apparently harſh and repulſive; and ſuch as would not have been made for Chriſt, if he had not really uſed it. At leaſt, ſome other inſtance would have been choſen.

The following paſſage, I, for the ſame reaſon, think impoſſible to have been the production of artifice, or of a cold forgery: —"But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his brother, without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgement? and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the council; but whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire (Gehennæ)." Mat. v. 22. It is emphatic, cogent, and well calculated for the purpoſe of impreſſion; but is inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of art or warineſs on the part of the relator.

The ſhort reply of our Lord to Mary Magdalen after his reſurrection (John xx. 16, 17.) "Touch me not, for I am not

yet aſcended unto my Father," in my opinion, muſt have been founded in a reference or alluſion to ſome prior converſation, for the want of knowing which, his meaning is hidden from us. This very obſcurity, however, is a proof of genuineneſs. No one would have forged ſuch an anſwer.

John vi. The whole of the converſation, recorded in this chapter, is, in the higheſt degree, unlikely to be fabricated, eſpecially the part of our Saviour's reply between the fiftieth and the fifty-eighth verſe. I need only put down the firſt ſentence. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he ſhall live for ever; and the bread that I will give him is my fleſh, which I will give for the life of the world." Without calling in queſtion the expoſitions that have been given of this paſſage, we may be permitted to ſay, that it labours under an obſcurity, in which it is impoſſible to believe that any one, who made ſpeeches for the perſons of his narrative, would have voluntarily involved

volved them. That this diſcourſe was obſcure even at the time, is confeſſed by the writer who has preſerved it, when he tells us at the concluſion, that many of our Lord's diſciples, when they had heard this, ſaid, "This is a hard ſaying, who can bear it?"

Chriſt's taking of a young child, and placing it in the midſt of his contentious diſciples (Mat. xviii. 2.), though as deciſive a proof, as any could be, of the benignity of his temper, and very expreſſive of the character of the religion which he wiſhed to inculcate, was not by any means an obvious thought. Nor am I acquainted with any thing in any ancient writing which reſembles it.

The account of the inſtitution of the Euchariſt bears ſtrong internal marks of genuineneſs. If it had been feigned, it would have been more full. It would have come nearer to the actual mode of celebrating the rite, as that mode obtained very early

early in Chriſtian churches: and it would have been more formal than it is. In the forged piece called the Apoſtolic Conſtitutions, the apoſtles are made to enjoin many parts of the ritual which was in uſe in the ſecond and third centuries, with as much particularity as a modern rubric could have done. Whereas, in the hiſtory of the Lord's ſupper, as we read it in St. Matthew's goſpel, there is not ſo much as the command to repeat it. This, ſurely, looks like undeſignedneſs. I think alſo that the difficulty ariſing from the conciſeneſs of Chriſt's expreſſion, "This is my body," would have been avoided in a made-up ſtory. I allow that the explication of theſe words, given by Proteſtants, is ſatisfactory; but it is deduced from a diligent compariſon of the words in queſtion with forms of expreſſion uſed in ſcripture, and eſpecially by Chriſt, upon other occaſions. No writer would arbitrarily and unneceſſarily have thus caſt in his reader's way a difficulty, which, to ſay the leaſt, it required reſearch and erudition to clear up.

Now it ought to be obſerved, that the argument which is built upon theſe examples, extends both to the authenticity of the books and to the truth of the narrative: for it is improbable, that the forger of a hiſtory in the name of another ſhould have inſerted ſuch paſſages into it: and it is improbable alſo, that the perſons whoſe names the books bear ſhould have fabricated ſuch paſſages; or even have allowed them a place in their work, if they had not believed them to expreſs the truth.

The following obſervation, therefore, of Dr. Lardner, the moſt candid of all advocates, and the moſt cautious of all enquirers, ſeems to be well-founded:—"Chriſtians are induced to believe the writers of the goſpel, by obſerving the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit or artifice, or cunning, or deſign." "No remarks," as Dr. Beattie hath properly ſaid, "are thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution, which never fails to diſtinguiſh the

teſtimony of thoſe who are conſcious of impoſture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative."

I beg leave to cite alſo another author *, who has well expreſſed the reflection which the examples now brought forward were intended to ſuggeſt. "It doth not appear that ever it came into the mind of theſe writers, to conſider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raiſed upon them. But, without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their teſtimony, there is no help for it: they tell the truth, and attend to nothing elſe. Surely this looks like ſincerity, and that they publiſhed nothing to the world but what they believed themſelves."

* Duchal, p. 97, 98.

As no improper ſupplement to this chapter, I crave a place here for obſerving the extreme *naturalneſs* of ſome of the things related in the New Teſtament.

Mark ix. 23. "Jeſus ſaid unto him, If thou canſt believe, all things are poſſible to him that believeth. And ſtraightway the father of the child cried out, and ſaid with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." The ſtruggle in the father's heart, between ſolicitude for the preſervation of his child, and a kind of involuntary diſtruſt of Chriſt's power to heal him, is here expreſſed with an air of reality, which could hardly be counterfeited.

Again, (Mat. xxi. 9.) the eagerneſs of the people to introduce Chriſt into Jeruſalem, and their demand, a ſhort time afterwards, of his crucifixion, when he did not turn out what they expected him to be, ſo far from affording matter of objection, repreſents popular favour in exact agreement

with

with nature and with experience, as the flux and reflux of a wave.

The Rulers and Phariſees rejecting Chriſt, whilſt many of the common people received him, was the effect which, in the then ſtate of Jewiſh prejudices, I ſhould have expected. And the reaſon with which they who rejected Chriſt's miſſion kept themſelves in countenance, and with which alſo they anſwered the arguments of thoſe who favoured it, is preciſely the reaſon which ſuch men uſually give:—"Have any of the Scribes or Phariſees believed on him?" John vii. 48.

In our Lord's converſation at the well, (John iv. 29.) Chriſt had ſurpriſed the Samaritan woman with an alluſion to a ſingle particular in her domeſtic ſituation, "Thou haſt had five huſbands, and he, whom thou now haſt, is not thy huſband." The woman, ſoon after this, ran back to the city, and called out to her neighbours, "Come, ſee a man which told me *all things* that ever

 I did."

I did." This exaggeration appears to me very natural; eſpecially in the hurried ſtate of ſpirits into which the woman may be ſuppoſed to have been thrown.

The lawyer's ſubtlety in running a diſtinction upon the word neighbour, in the precept "Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf," was no leſs natural than our Saviour's anſwer was deciſive and ſatisfactory. (Luke x. 29.) The lawyer of the New Teſtament, it muſt be obſerved, was a Jewiſh divine.

The behaviour of Gallio, Acts xviii. 12—17, and of Feſtus, xxv. 18, 19, have been obſerved upon already.

The conſiſtency of St. Paul's character throughout the whole of his hiſtory, (viz. the warmth and activity of his zeal, firſt againſt, and then for Chriſtianity) carries with it very much of the appearance of truth.

There

There are alſo ſome *proprieties*, as they may be called, obſervable in the goſpels; that is, circumſtances ſeparately ſuiting with the ſituation, character, and intention of their reſpective authors.

St. Matthew, who was an inhabitant of Galilee, and did not join Chriſt's ſociety until ſome time after Chriſt had come into Galilee to preach, has given us very little of his hiſtory prior to that period. St. John, who had been converted before, and who wrote to ſupply omiſſions in the other goſpels, relates ſome remarkable particulars, which had taken place before Chriſt left Judea to go into Galilee *.

St. Matthew (xv. 1.) has recorded the cavil of the Phariſees againſt the diſciples of Jeſus, for eating "with unclean hands." St. Mark has alſo (vii. 1.) recorded the ſame tranſaction (taken probably from St. Matthew), but with this addition, "For the

* Hartley's Obſ. vol. ii. p. 103.

Phariſees, and all the Jews, except they waſh their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market, except they waſh they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the waſhing of cups and pots, brazen veſſels, and of tables." Now St. Matthew was not only a Jew himſelf, but it is evident, from the whole ſtructure of his goſpel, eſpecially from his numerous references to the Old Teſtament, that he wrote for Jewiſh readers. The above explanation therefore in him would have been unnatural, as not being wanted by the readers whom he addreſſed. But in Mark, who, whatever uſe he might make of Matthew's goſpel, intended his own narrative for a general circulation, and who himſelf travelled to diſtant countries in the ſervice of the religion, it was properly added.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Identity of Chriſt's character.

THE argument expreſſed by this title I apply principally to the compariſon of the three firſt goſpels with that of St. John. It is known to every reader of ſcripture, that the paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory preſerved by St. John, are, except his paſſion and reſurrection, for the moſt part different from thoſe which are delivered by the other evangeliſts. And I think the ancient account of this difference to be the true one, viz. that St. John wrote *after* the reſt, and to ſupply what he thought omiſſions in their narratives, of which the principal were our Saviour's conferences with the Jews of Jeruſalem, and his diſcourſes to his apoſtles at his laſt ſupper. But what I obſerve in the compariſon of theſe ſeveral accounts is, that, although actions and diſcourſes are aſcribed to Chriſt by

St. John, in general different from what are given to him by the other evangeliſts, yet, under this diverſity, there is a ſimilitude of *manner*, which indicates that the actions and diſcourſes proceeded from the ſame perſon. I ſhould have laid little ſtreſs upon a repetition of actions ſubſtantially alike, or of diſcourſes containing many of the ſame expreſſions, becauſe that is a ſpecies of reſemblance, which would either belong to a true hiſtory, or might eaſily be imitated in a falſe one. Nor do I deny, that a dramatic writer is able to ſuſtain propriety and diſtinction of character, through a great variety of ſeparate incidents and ſituations. But the evangeliſts were not dramatic writers, nor poſſeſſed the talents of dramatic writers; nor will it, I believe, be ſuſpected, that they *ſtudied* uniformity of character, or ever thought of any ſuch thing, in the perſon who was the ſubject of their hiſtories. Such uniformity, if it exiſt, is on their part caſual; and if there be, as I contend there is, a perceptible reſemblance of *manner*, in paſſages, and between diſcourſes, which are in themſelves

ſelves extremely diſtinct, and are delivered by hiſtorians writing without any imitation of, or reference to, one another, it affords a juſt preſumption, that theſe are, what they profeſs to be, the actions and the diſcourſes of the ſame real perſon; that the evangeliſts wrote from fact, and not from imagination.

The article in which I find this agreement moſt ſtrong, is in our Saviour's mode of teaching, and in that particular property of it, which conſiſts in his drawing of his doctrine from the occaſion; or, which is nearly the ſame thing, raiſing reflections from the objects and incidents before him, or turning a particular diſcourſe then paſſing into an opportunity of general inſtruction.

It will be my buſineſs to point out this *manner* in the three firſt evangeliſts; and then to inquire whether it do not appear alſo, in ſeveral examples of Chriſt's diſcourſes, preſerved by St. John.

The reader will obſerve in the following quotations,

quotations, that the Italic letter contains the reflection, the common letter the incident or occaſion from which it ſprings.

Mat. xii. 49, 50. "Then they ſaid unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren ſtand without, deſiring to ſpeak with thee. But he anſwered, and ſaid unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he ſtretched forth his hands towards his diſciples, and ſaid, Behold my mother and my brethren; *for whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, and ſiſter, and mother.*"

Mat. xvi. 5. "And when his diſciples were come to the other ſide, they had forgotten to take bread; then Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Phariſees, and of the Sadducees.* And they reaſoned among themſelves, ſaying, It is becauſe we have taken no bread.—How is it that ye do not underſtand, that I ſpake it not to you concerning bread, that ye ſhould beware of the leaven of the Phariſees, and of the

the Sadducees? Then underſtood they *how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the* DOCTRINE *of the Phariſees and of the Sadducees.*"

Mat. xv. 1, 2. 10, 11. 17—20. "Then came to Jeſus Scribes and Phariſees, which were of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the traditions of the elders? for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread.——And he called the multitude, and ſaid unto them, Hear and underſtand, *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*——Then anſwered Peter, and ſaid unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jeſus ſaid, Are ye alſo yet without underſtanding? Do ye not yet underſtand, that whatſoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is caſt out into the draught? but thoſe things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man; *for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies;*

blaſphemies; theſe are the things which defile a man, BUT TO EAT WITH UNWASHEN HANDS DEFILETH NOT A MAN." Our Saviour, upon this occaſion, expatiates rather more at large than uſual, and his diſcourſe alſo is more divided; but the concluding ſentence brings back the whole train of thought to the incident in the firſt verſe, viz. the objurgatory queſtion of the Phariſees, and renders it evident that the whole ſprung from that circumſtance.

Mark x. 13, 14, 15. "And they brought young children to him, that he ſhould touch them, and his diſciples rebuked thoſe that brought them; but when Jeſus ſaw it, he was much diſpleaſed, and ſaid unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, *for of ſuch is the kingdom of God: verily I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein.*"

Mark i. 16, 17. "Now as he walked by the ſea of Galilee, he ſaw Simon and Andrew

Andrew his brother caſting a net into the ſea, for they were fiſhers; and Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Come ye after me, and I will make you fiſhers of men.*"

Luke xi. 27. "And it came to paſs as he ſpake theſe things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice and ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked; but he ſaid, *Yea, rather bleſſed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*"

Luke xiii. 1—5. "There were preſent at that ſeaſon ſome that told him of the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate had mingled with their ſacrifices; and Jeſus anſwering, ſaid unto them, *Suppoſe ye that theſe Galileans were ſinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*"

Luke xiv. 15. "And when one of them, that ſat at meat with him, heard theſe things, he ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat bread

bread in the kingdom of God. Then ſaid he unto him, *A certain man made a great ſupper, and bade many*," &c. The parable is rather too long for inſertion, but affords a ſtriking inſtance of Chriſt's *manner* of raiſing a diſcourſe from the occaſion. Obſerve alſo in the ſame chapter two other examples of advice, drawn from the circumſtances of the entertainment and the behaviour of the gueſts.

We will now ſee, how this *manner* diſcovers itſelf in *St. John's* hiſtory of Chriſt.

John vi. 26. "And when they had found him on the other ſide of the ſea, they ſaid unto him, Rabbi, when cameſt thou hither? Jeſus anſwered them, and ſaid, Verily I ſay unto you, ye ſeek me not becauſe ye ſaw the miracles, but becauſe ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. *Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlaſting life, which the Son of man ſhall give unto you.*"

John

John iv. 12. "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himſelf, and his children, and his cattle? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her (the woman of Samaria), Whoſoever drinketh of this water ſhall thirſt again, but *whoſoever drinketh of the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt; but the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall be in him a well of water, ſpringing up into everlaſting life.*"

John iv. 31. "In the mean while, his diſciples prayed him, ſaying, Maſter, eat; but he ſaid unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore ſaid the diſciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jeſus ſaith unto them, *My meat is, to do the will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his work.*"

John ix. 1—5. "And as Jeſus paſſed by, he ſaw a man which was blind from his birth: and his diſciples aſked him, ſaying, Who did ſin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jeſus anſwered, Neither

hath this man ſinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him. *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"

John ix. 35---40. "Jeſus heard that they had caſt him (the blind man above mentioned) out; and when he had found him, he ſaid unto him, Doſt thou believe on the Son of God? And he anſwered and ſaid, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou haſt both ſeen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he ſaid, Lord, I believe; and he worſhipped him. And Jeſus ſaid, *For judgement I am come into this world, that they which ſee not might ſee, and that they which ſee might be made blind.*"

All that the reader has now to do, is to compare the ſeries of examples taken from St. John, with the ſeries of examples taken from the other evangelifts, and to judge whether

whether there be not a viſible agreement of *manner* between them. In the above quoted paſſages, the occaſion is ſtated, as well as the reflection. They ſeem therefore the moſt proper for the purpoſe of our argument. A large, however, and curious collection has been made by different writers*, of inſtances, in which it is extremely probable that Chriſt ſpoke in alluſion to ſome object, or ſome occaſion then before him, though the mention of the occaſion, or of the object, be omitted in the hiſtory. I only obſerve that theſe inſtances are common to St. John's goſpel with the other three.

I conclude this article by remarking, that nothing of this *manner* is perceptible in the ſpeeches recorded in the Acts, or in any other but thoſe which are attributed to Chriſt, and that, in truth, it was a very unlikely manner for a forger or fabuliſt to attempt; and a manner very difficult for any

* Newton on Daniel, p. 148, note *a*. Jortin, Diſ. p. 213. Biſhop Law's Life of Chriſt.

writer to execute, if he had to ſupply all the materials, both the incidents, and the obſervations upon them, out of his own head. A forger or a fabuliſt would have made for Chriſt, diſcourſes exhorting to virtue and diſſuading from vice in general terms. It would never have entered into the thoughts of either, to have crowded together ſuch a number of alluſions, to time, place, and other little circumſtances, as occur, for inſtance, in the ſermon on the mount, and which nothing but the actual preſence of the objects could have ſuggeſted *.

II. There appears to me to exiſt an affinity between the hiſtory of Chriſt's placing a little child in the midſt of his diſciples, as related by the three firſt evangeliſts †, and the hiſtory of Chriſt's waſhing his diſciples' feet, as given by St. John ‡. In the ſtories

* See Biſhop Law's Life of Chriſt.

† Mat. xviii. 1. Mark ix. 33. Luke ix. 46.

‡ xiii. 3.

them-

themſelves there is no reſemblance. But the affinity which I would point out, conſiſts in theſe two articles: firſt, that both ſtories denote the emulation which prevailed amongſt Chriſt's diſciples, and his own care and deſire to correct it. The moral of both is the ſame. Secondly, that both ſtories are ſpecimens of the ſame manner of teaching, viz. by action; a mode of emblematic inſtruction extremely peculiar, and, in theſe paſſages, aſcribed, we ſee, to our Saviour, by the three firſt evangeliſts and by St. John, in inſtances totally unlike, and without the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion of their borrowing from each other.

III. A ſingularity in Chriſt's language, which runs through all the evangeliſts, and which is found in thoſe diſcourſes of St. John that have nothing ſimilar to them in the other goſpels, is the appellation of "the Son of Man;" and it is in all the evangeliſts found under the peculiar circumſtance of being applied by Chriſt to himſelf, but

of never being uſed of him, or towards him, by any other perſon. It occurs ſeventeen times in Matthew's goſpel, twelve times in Mark's, twenty-one times in Luke's, and eleven times in John's, and always with this reſtriction.

IV. A point of agreement in the conduct of Chriſt, as repreſented by his different hiſtorians, is that of his withdrawing himſelf out of the way, whenever the behaviour of the multitude indicated a diſpoſition to tumult.

Mat. xiv. 22. "And ſtraightway Jeſus conſtrained his diſciples to get into a ſhip, and to go before him unto the other ſide, while he ſent the multitude away. And when he had ſent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."

Luke v. 15, 16. "But ſo much the more went there a fame abroad of him, and great multitudes came together to hear, and to

to be healed by him of their infirmities: and he withdrew himſelf into the wilderneſs and prayed."

With theſe quotations compare the following from St. John:

Chap. v. 13. "And he that was healed wiſt not who it was, for Jeſus had conveyed himſelf away, a multitude being in that place."

Chap. vi. 15. "When Jeſus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain by himſelf alone."

In this laſt inſtance St. John gives the motive of Chriſt's conduct, which is left unexplained by the other evangeliſts, who have related the conduct itſelf.

V. Another, and a more ſingular circumſtance in Chriſt's miniſtry, was the reſerve,

which, for ſome time, and upon ſome occaſions at leaſt, he uſed in declaring his own character, and his leaving it to be collected from his works rather than his profeſſions. Juſt reaſons for this reſerve have been aſſigned *. But it is not what one would have expected. We meet with it in Matthew's goſpel (xvi. 20), "Then charged he his diſciples that they ſhould tell no man that he was Jeſus the Chriſt." Again, and upon a different occaſion, in Mark's (iii. 11), "And unclean ſpirits, when they ſaw him, fell down before him, and cried, ſaying, Thou art the Son of God; and he ſtraitly charged them that they ſhould not make him known." Another inſtance ſimilar to this laſt is recorded by St. Luke (iv. 41). What we thus find in the three evangeliſts, appears alſo in a paſſage of St. John (x. 24, 35). "Then came the Jews round about him, and ſaid unto him, How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly." The occaſion here was dif-

* See Locke's Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity.

ferent

ferent from any of the reſt; and it was indirect. We only diſcover Chriſt's conduct through the upbraidings of his adverſaries. But all this ſtrengthens the argument. I had rather at any time ſurpriſe a coincidence in ſome oblique alluſion, than read it in broad aſſertions.

VI. In our Lord's commerce with his diſciples, one very obſervable particular is the difficulty which they found in underſtanding him, when he ſpoke to them of the future part of his hiſtory, eſpecially of what related to his paſſion or reſurrection. This difficulty produced, as was natural, a wiſh in them to aſk for further explanation; from which, however, they appear to have been ſometimes kept back, by the fear of giving offence. All theſe circumſtances are diſtinctly noticed by Mark and Luke, upon the occaſion of his informing them (probably for the firſt time) that the ſon of man ſhould be delivered into the hands of men. "They underſtood not," the evangeliſts tell us, "this ſaying, and it was hid from them, that

that they perceived it not; and they feared to aſk him of that ſaying." Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 32. In St. John's goſpel we have, upon a different occaſion, and in a different inſtance, the ſame difficulty of apprehenſion, the ſame curioſity, and the ſame reſtraint:—" A little while and ye ſhall not ſee me, and again a little while and ye ſhall ſee me, becauſe I go to the Father. Then ſaid ſome of his diſciples among themſelves, What is this that he ſaith unto us? A little while and ye ſhall not ſee me, and again a little while and ye ſhall ſee me, and becauſe I go to the Father? They ſaid, therefore, What is this that he ſaith, a little while? We cannot tell what he ſaith. Now Jeſus knew that they were deſirous to aſk him, and ſaid unto them," &c. John xvi. 16 et ſeq.

VII. The meekneſs of Chriſt during his laſt ſufferings, which is conſpicuous in the narratives of the three firſt evangeliſts, is preſerved in that of St. John under ſeparate examples. The anſwer given by him, in St.

St. John*, when the high prieſt aſked him of his diſciples and his doctrine, "I ſpake openly to the world, I ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always reſort, and in ſecret have I ſaid nothing; why aſkeſt thou me? Aſk them which heard me, what I have ſaid unto them;" is very much of a piece with his reply to the armed party which ſeized him, as we read it in St. Mark's goſpel, and in St. Luke's †: "Are you come out as againſt a thief with ſwords and with ſtaves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." In both anſwers we diſcern the ſame tranquillity, the ſame reference to his public teaching. His mild expoſtulation with Pilate upon two ſeveral occaſions, as related by St. John ‡, is delivered with the ſame unruffled temper, as that which conducted him through the laſt ſcene of his life, as deſcribed by his other evangeliſts. His an-

* xviii. 20.

† Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52.

‡ xviii. 34. xix. 11.

ſwer,

ſwer, in St. John's goſpel, to the officer who ſtruck him with the palm of his hand, "If I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil, but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me *?" was ſuch an anſwer, as might have been looked for from the perſon, who, as he proceeded to the place of execution, bid his companions (as we are told by St. Luke †) weep not for him, but for themſelves, their poſterity, and their country; and who, whilſt he was ſuſpended upon the croſs, prayed for his murderers, "for they know not (ſaid he) what they do." The urgency alſo of his judges and his proſecutors to extort from him a defence to the accuſation, and his unwillingneſs to make any (which was a peculiar circumſtance) appears in St. John's account, as well as in that of the other evangeliſts ‡.

There are moreover two other correſpondencies between St. John's hiſtory of the

* xxviii. 23. † xxiii. 28.

‡ See John xix. 9. Mat. xxvii. 14. Luke xxiii. 9.

tranſaction and theirs, of a kind ſomewhat different from thoſe which we have been now mentioning.

The three firſt evangeliſts record what is called our Saviour's agony, *i. e.* his devotion in the garden immediately before he was apprehended; in which narrative they all make him pray, "that the cup might paſs from him." This is the particular metaphor which they all aſcribe to him. St. Matthew adds, "O my Father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done *." Now St. John does not give the ſcene in the garden; but when Jeſus was ſeized, and ſome reſiſtance was attempted to be made by Peter, Jeſus, according to his account, checked the attempt with this reply: "Put up thy ſword into the ſheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it †?" This is ſomething more than conſiſtency: it is coincidence: becauſe it is extremely

* xxvi. 42. † xviii. 11.

natural,

natural, that Jeſus, who, before he was apprehended, had been praying his Father, that "that cup might paſs from him," yet with ſuch a pious retractation of his requeſt, as to have added, "If this cup may not paſs from me, thy will be done;" it was natural, I ſay, for the ſame perſon, when he actually was apprehended, to expreſs the reſignation to which he had already made up his thoughts, and to expreſs it in the form of ſpeech which he had before uſed, "The cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" This is a coincidence between writers, in whoſe narratives there is no imitation, but great diverſity.

A ſecond ſimilar correſpondency is the following: Matthew and Mark make the charge, upon which our Lord was condemned, to be a threat of deſtroying the temple; "We heard him ſay, I will deſtroy this temple, made with hands, and, within three days, I will build another made without hands *;" but they neither of them in-

* Mark xiv. 5.

form

form us, upon what circumſtance this calumny was founded. St. John, in the early part of the hiſtory *, ſupplies us with this information; for he relates, that, upon our Lord's firſt journey to Jeruſalem, when the Jews aſked him, "What ſign ſheweſt thou unto us, ſeeing that thou doeſt theſe things? he anſwered, Deſtroy this temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up." This agreement could hardly ariſe from any thing but the truth of the caſe. From any care or deſign in St. John, to make his narrative tally with the narratives of the other evangeliſts, it certainly did not ariſe, for no ſuch deſign appears, but the abſence of it.

A ſtrong and more general inſtance of agreement, is the following. The three firſt evangeliſts have related the appointment of the twelve apoſtles †; and have given a catalogue of their names in form. John, without ever mentioning the appointment, or giving the catalogue, ſuppoſes, through-

* ii. 19.

† Mat. x. 1. Mark iii. 14. Luke vi. 12.

out

out his whole narrative, Chriſt to be accompanied by a ſelect party of diſciples; the number of theſe to be twelve *; and whenever he happens to notice any one as of that number †, it is one included in the catalogue of the other evangeliſts; and the names principally occurring in the courſe of *his* hiſtory of Chriſt, are the names extant in their liſt. This laſt agreement, which is of conſiderable moment, runs through every goſpel, and through every chapter of each.

All this beſpeaks reality.

* vi. 7. † xx. 24. vi. 71.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Originality of our Saviour's character.

THE Jews, whether right or wrong, had underſtood their prophecies to foretell the advent of a perſon, who by ſome ſupernatural aſſiſtance ſhould advance their nation to independence, and to a ſupreme degree of ſplendour and proſperity. This was the reigning opinion and expectation of the times.

Now, had Jeſus been an enthuſiaſt, it is probable that his enthuſiaſm would have fallen in with the popular deluſion, and that, whilſt he gave himſelf out to be the perſon intended by theſe predictions, he would have aſſumed the character to which they were univerſally ſuppoſed to relate.

Had he been an impoſtor, it was his buſineſs to have flattered the prevailing hopes, becauſe theſe hopes were to be the inſtruments of his attraction and ſucceſs.

But, what is better than conjectures, is the fact, that all the pretended Meſſiahs actually did ſo. We learn from Joſephus that there were many of theſe. Some of them, it is probable, might be impoſtors, who thought that an advantage was to be taken of the ſtate of public opinion. Others, perhaps, were enthuſiaſts, whoſe imagination had been drawn to this particular object, by the language and ſentiments which prevailed around them. But, whether impoſtors or enthuſiaſts, they concurred in producing themſelves in the character which their countrymen looked for, that is to ſay, as the reſtorers and deliverers of the nation, in that ſenſe in which reſtoration and deliverance were expected by the Jews.

Why therefore Jeſus, if he was, like them, either an enthuſiaſt or impoſtor, did not purſue the ſame conduct as they did, in framing his character and pretenſions, it will be found difficult to explain. A miſſion, the operation and benefit of which was to take place in another life, was a thing unthought of as the ſubject of theſe prophecies. That Jeſus, coming to them as their Meſſiah, ſhould come under a character totally different from that in which they expected him; ſhould deviate from the general perſuaſion, and deviate into pretenſions abſolutely ſingular and original; appears to be inconſiſtent with the imputation of enthuſiaſm or impoſture, both which, by their nature, I ſhould expect, would, and both which, throughout the experience which this very ſubject furniſhes, in fact *have*, followed the opinions that obtained at the time.

If it be ſaid, that Jeſus, having tried the other plan, turned at length to this; I an-

ſwer, that the thing is ſaid without evidence; againſt evidence; that it was competent to the reſt to have done the ſame, yet that nothing of this ſort was thought of by any.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

ONE argument, which has been much relied upon (but not more than its juſt weight deſerves), is the conformity of the facts occaſionally mentioned or referred to in ſcripture, with the ſtate of things in thoſe times, as repreſented by foreign and independent accounts. Which conformity proves, that the writers of the New Teſtament poſſeſſed a ſpecies of local knowledge, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. This argument, if well made out by examples, is very little ſhort of proving the abſolute genuineneſs of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors, to an age, in which it muſt have been difficult to impoſe upon the Chriſtian public, forgeries in the names of thoſe authors, and in which there is no evidence that any forgeries were attempted. It proves at leaſt, that the books,

whoever were the authors of them, were compoſed by perſons living in the time and country in which theſe things were tranſacted; and conſequently capable, by their ſituation, of being well informed of the facts which they relate. And the argument is ſtronger, when applied to the New Teſtament, than it is in the caſe of almoſt any other writings, by reaſon of the mixed nature of the alluſions which this book contains. The ſcene of action is not confined to a ſingle country, but diſplayed in the greateſt cities of the Roman empire. Alluſions are made to the manners and principles of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. This variety renders a forgery proportionably more difficult, eſpecially to writers of a poſterior age. A Greek or Roman Chriſtian, who lived in the ſecond or third century, would have been wanting in Jewiſh literature; a Jewiſh convert in thoſe ages would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome*.

* Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teſtament (Marſh's tranſlation), c. ii. ſec. xi.

This,

This, however, is an argument which depends entirely upon an induction of particulars; and as, conſequently, it carries with it little force, without a view of the inſtances upon which it is built, I have to requeſt the reader's attention to a detail of examples, diſtinctly and articulately propoſed. In collecting theſe examples, I have done no more than epitomize the firſt volume of the firſt part of Dr. Lardner's Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory. And I have brought the argument within its preſent compaſs, firſt, by paſſing over ſome of his ſections in which the accordancy appeared to me leſs certain, or upon ſubjects not ſufficiently appropriate or circumſtantial; ſecondly, by contracting every ſection into the feweſt words poſſible, contenting myſelf for the moſt part with a mere *appoſition* of paſſages; and, thirdly, by omitting many diſquiſitions, which, though learned and accurate, are not abſolutely neceſſary to the underſtanding or verification of the argument.

The writer principally made uſe of in

the enquiry, is Joſephus. Joſephus was born at Jeruſalem four years after Chriſt's aſcenſion. He wrote his hiſtory of the Jewiſh war ſome time after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which happened in the year of our Lord ſeventy, that is, thirty-ſeven years after the aſcenſion; and his hiſtory of the Jews he finiſhed in the year ninety-three, that is, ſixty years after the aſcenſion.

At the head of each article, I have referred, by figures included in brackets, to the page of Dr. Lardner's volume, where the ſection, from which the abridgement is made, begins. The edition uſed is that of 1741.

I. (p. 14.) Mat. xi. 22. "When he (Joſeph) heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithſtanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aſide into the parts of Galilee."

In this paſſage it is aſſerted, that Archelaus

laus ſucceeded Herod in Judea; and it is implied, that his power did *not* extend to Galilee. Now we learn from Joſephus, that Herod the Great, whoſe dominion included all the land of Iſrael, appointed Archelaus his ſucceſſor in *Judea*, and aſſigned the *reſt* of his dominions to other ſons; and that this diſpoſition was ratified, as to the main parts of it, by the Roman emperor *.

St. Matthew ſays, that Archelaus *reigned*, was *king* in Judea. Agreeably to this, we are informed by Joſephus, not only that Herod appointed Archelaus his ſucceſſor in Judea, but that he alſo appointed him with the title of king; and the Greek verb βασιλευει, which the evangeliſt uſes to denote the government and rank of Archelaus, is uſed likewiſe by Joſephus †.

The cruelty of Archelaus's character, which is not obſcurely intimated by the

* Ant. lib. xvii. c. 8, ſec. 1.

† De Bell. lib. i. c. 33, ſec. 7.

evan-

evangeliſt, agrees with divers particulars in his hiſtory, preſerved by Joſephus. "In the tenth year of his government, the chief of the Jews and Samaritans, not being able to endure his cruelty and tyranny, preſented complaints againſt him to Ceſar *."

II. (p. 19.) Luke iii. 1. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Ceſar—Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis—the word of God came unto John."

By the will of Herod the Great, and the decree of Auguſtus thereupon, his two ſons were appointed, one (Herod Antipas) tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, and the other (Philip) tetrarch of Trachonitis and the neighbouring countries†. We have therefore theſe two perſons in the ſituations in which St. Luke places them; and alſo, that they were in theſe ſituations in the *fifteenth*

* Ant. lib. xvii. c. 13, ſec. 1.
† Ant. lib. xvii. c. 8, ſec. 1.

year

year of Tiberius; in other words, that they continued in poſſeſſion of their territories and titles until that time, and afterwards, appears from a paſſage of Joſephus, which relates of Herod, "that he was *removed* by Caligula, the ſucceſſor of Tiberius*; and of Philip, that he died in the *twentieth* year of Tiberius, when he had governed Trachonitis and Batanea and Gaulanitis thirty-ſeven years†."

III. (p. 20.) Mark v. 17‡. "Herod had ſent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him in priſon, for Herodias' ſake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her."

With this compare Joſ. Ant. l. xviii. c. 6, ſec. 1. "He (Herod the tetrarch) made a viſit to Herod his brother—Here, falling in love with Herodias, the wife of the ſaid

* Ant. lib. xviii. c. 8, ſec. 2.
† Ant. lib. xviii. c. 5, ſec. 6.
‡ See alſo Mat. xiv. 1—13. Luke iii. 19.

Herod,

Herod, he ventured to make her propoſals of marriage *."

Again, Mark vi. 22. "And when the *daughter of the ſaid Herodias* came in and danced——"

With this alſo compare Joſ. Ant. l. xviii. c. 6, ſec. 4. "Herodias was married to Herod, ſon of Herod the Great. *They had a daughter*, whoſe name was Salome; after

* The affinity of the two accounts is unqueſtionable; but there is a difference in the name of Herodias's firſt huſband, which, in the evangeliſt, is Philip; in Joſephus, Herod. The difficulty, however, will not appear conſiderable, when we recollect how common it was, in thoſe times, for the ſame perſon to bear two names: "Simon, which is called Peter; Lebbeus, whoſe ſurname is Thaddeus; Thomas, which is called Didymus; Simeon, who was called Niger; Saul, who was alſo called Paul." The ſolution is rendered likewiſe eaſier in the preſent caſe, by the conſideration, that Herod the Great had children by ſeven or eight wives; that Joſephus mentions three of his ſons under the name of Herod; that it is nevertheleſs highly probable, that the brothers bore ſome additional name, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from one another. Lard. vol. ii. p. 897.

whoſe

whoſe birth, Herodias, in utter violation of the laws of her country, left her huſband then living, and married Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, her huſband's brother by the father's ſide."

IV. (p. 29.) Acts xii. 1. "Now, about that time, *Herod the king* ſtretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the church." In the concluſion of the ſame chapter, Herod's *death* is repreſented to have taken place ſoon after this perſecution. The accuracy of our hiſtorian, or, rather, the unmeditated coincidence, which truth of its own accord produces, is in this inſtance remarkable. There was no portion of time, for thirty years before, nor *ever* afterwards, in which there was a *king* at Jeruſalem, a perſon exerciſing that authority in Judea, or to whom that title could be applied, except the three laſt years of this Herod's life, within which period the tranſaction recorded in the Acts is ſtated to have taken place. This prince was the grandſon of Herod the Great. In the Acts he appears under his family name of

of Herod; by Josephus he is called Agrippa. For proof that he was a *king*, properly so called, we have the testimony of Josephus in full and direct terms:—"Sending for him to his palace, Caligula put a crown upon his head, and appointed him king of the tetrarchie of Philip, intending also to give him the tetrarchie of Lysanias *." And that Judea was at last, but not until the last, included in his dominions, appears by a subsequent passage of the same Josephus, wherein he tells us, that Claudius, by a decree, confirmed to Agrippa the dominion which Caligula had given him, *adding also Judea and Samaria, in the utmost extent, as possessed by his grandfather Herod* †.

V. (p. 32.) Acts xii. 19. 23. "And he (Herod) went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode.—And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them; and the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man; and im-

* Ant. xviii. c. 7, sec. 10. † Ib. xix. c. 5, sec. 1.

mediately the angel of the Lord ſmote him, becauſe he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghoſt."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xix. c. 8, ſec. 2. "He went to the city Ceſarea. Here he celebrated ſhows in honour of Ceſar. On the ſecond day of the ſhows, early in the morning, he came into the theatre, dreſſed in a robe of ſilver of moſt curious workmanſhip. The rays of the riſing ſun, reflected from ſuch a ſplendid garb, gave him a majeſtic and awful appearance. They called him a god, and entreated him to be propitious to them, ſaying, Hitherto we have reſpected you as a man, but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal. The king neither reproved theſe perſons, nor rejected the impious flattery.—Immediately after this he was ſeized with pains in his bowels, extremely violent at the very firſt.—He was carried therefore with all haſte to his palace. Theſe pains continually tormenting him, he expired in five days time."

The

The reader will perceive the accordancy of theſe accounts in various particulars. The place (Ceſarea), the ſet day, the gorgeous dreſs, the acclamations of the aſſembly, the peculiar turn of the flattery, the reception of it, the ſudden and critical incurſion of the diſeaſe, are circumſtances noticed in both narratives. The worms mentioned by St. Luke are not remarked by Joſephus, but the appearance of theſe is a ſymptom, not unuſually, I believe, attending the diſeaſe which Joſephus deſcribes, viz. violent affections of the bowels.

VI. (p. 41.) Acts xxiv. 24. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Druſilla, which was a Jeweſs, he ſent for Paul."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xx. c. 6, ſec. 1, 2. "Agrippa gave his ſiſter Druſilla in marriage to Azizus, king of the Emeſenes, when he had conſented to be circumciſed—But this marriage of Druſilla with Azizus was diſſolved in a ſhort time after, in this manner:—When *Felix was procurator of Judea*, having had a ſight

of

of her, he was mightily taken with her—She was induced to tranſgreſs the laws of her country, and marry Felix."

Here the public ſtation of Felix, the name of his wife, and the ſingular circumſtance of her religion, all apppear in perfect conformity with the evangeliſt.

VII. (p. 46.) "And after certain days, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Ceſarea to ſalute Feſtus." By this paſſage we are in effect told, that Agrippa was a king, but not of Judea; for he came to ſalute Feſtus, who at this time adminiſtered the government of that country at Ceſarea.

Now how does the hiſtory of the age correſpond with this account? The Agrippa here ſpoken of, was the ſon of Herod Agrippa mentioned in the laſt article; but that he did not ſucceed to his father's kingdom, nor ever recovered Judea, which had been a part of it, we learn by the information of Joſephus, who relates of him, that, when

his father was dead, Claudius intended, at firſt, to have put him immediately in poſſeſſion of his father's dominions; but that, Agrippa being then but ſeventeen years of age, the emperor was perſuaded to alter his mind, and appointed Cuſpius Fadus prefect of Judea and the whole kingdom *; which Fadus was ſucceeded by Tiberius Alexander, Cumanus, Felix, Feſtus †. But that, though diſappointed of his father's kingdom, in which was included Judea, he was nevertheleſs rightly ſtyled *King* Agrippa; and that he was in poſſeſſion of conſiderable territories bordering upon Judea, we gather from the ſame authority; for, after ſeveral ſucceſſive donations of country, "Claudius, at the ſame time that he ſent Felix to be procurator of Judea, promoted Agrippa from Chalcis to a greater *kingdom*, giving to him the tetrarchie which had been Philip's; and he added moreover the *kingdom* of Lyſanias, and the province that had belonged to Varus ‡."

* Ant. xix. c. 9, ad fin.

† Ib. xx. De Bell. lib. ii.

‡ De Bell. lib. ii. c. 12, ad fin.

St.

St. Paul addreſſes this perſon as a Jew: "King Agrippa, believeſt thou the prophets? I know that thou believeſt." As the ſon of Herod Agrippa, who is deſcribed by Joſephus to have been a zealous Jew, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he maintained the ſame profeſſion. But what is more material to remark, becauſe it is more cloſe and circumſtantial, is, that St. Luke, ſpeaking of the father, (xii. 1. 3.) calls him Herod the king, and gives an example of the exerciſe of his authority at Jeruſalem: ſpeaking of the ſon, (xxv. 13.) he calls him king, but not of Judea; which diſtinction agrees correctly with the hiſtory.

VIII. (p. 51.) Acts xiii. 7. "And when they had gone through the iſle (Cyprus) to Paphos, they found a certain ſorcerer, a falſe prophet, a Jew, whoſe name was Barjeſus, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man."

The word, which is here tranſlated deputy, ſignifies *Proconſul*, and upon this word

our obſervation is founded. The provinces of the Roman empire were of two kinds; thoſe belonging to the emperor, in which the governor was called Propretor; and thoſe belonging to the ſenate, in which the governor was called Proconſul. And this was a regular diſtinction. Now it appears from Dio Caſſius *, that the province of Cyprus, which in the original diſtribution was aſſigned to the emperor, had been transferred to the ſenate, in exchange for ſome others; and that, after this exchange, the appropriate title of the Roman governor was Proconſul.

Ib. xviii. 12. (p. 55.) "And when Gallio was deputy *(Proconſul)* of Achaia."

The propriety of the title "Proconſul" is in this paſſage ſtill more critical. For the province of Achaia, after paſſing from the ſenate to the emperor, had been reſtored again by the emperor Claudius to the ſenate (and conſequently its government had be-

* Lib. liv. ad A. U. 732.

come

come *proconſular)* only ſix or ſeven years before the time in which this tranſaction is ſaid to have taken place*. And what confines with ſtrictneſs the appellation to the time is, that Achaia under the following reign ceaſed to be a Roman province at all.

IX. (p. 152.) It appears, as well from the general conſtitution of a Roman province, as from what Joſephus delivers concerning the ſtate of Judea in particular †, that the power of life and death reſided excluſively in the Roman governor; but that the Jews, nevertheleſs, had magiſtrates and a council, inveſted with a ſubordinate and municipal authority. This œconomy is diſcerned in every part of the goſpel narrative of our Saviour's crucifixion.

X. (p. 203.) Acts ix. 31. "Then had the churches reſt throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."

* Suet. in Claud. c. xxv. Dio, lib. lxi.

† Ant. lib. xx. c. 8, ſec. 5. c. 1, ſec. 2.

This *reſt* ſynchroniſes with the attempt of Caligula to place his ſtatue in the Temple of Jeruſalem; the threat of which outrage produced amongſt the Jews a conſternation, that, for a ſeaſon, diverted their attention from every other object *.

XI. (p. 218.) Acts xxi. 31. "And they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were ſhut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came to the chief captain of the *band*, that all Jeruſalem was in an uproar. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and demanded who he was, and what he had done; and ſome cried one thing, and ſome another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the *caſtle*. And when he came upon the *ſtairs*, ſo it was, that he was borne of the ſoldiers for the violence of the people."

* Joſ. de Bell. lib. xi. c. 10, ſec. 1. 3, 4.

In

In this quotation, we have the band of Roman ſoldiers at Jeruſalem, their office (to ſuppreſs tumults), the caſtle, the ſtairs, both, as it ſhould ſeem, adjoining to the temple. Let us enquire whether we can find theſe particulars in any other record of that age and place.

Joſ. de Bell. lib. v. c. 5, ſec. 8. "Antonia was ſituated at the angle of the weſtern and northern porticoes of the outer temple. It was built upon a rock fifty cubits high, ſteep on all ſides.—On that ſide where it joined to the porticoes of the temple, there were *ſtairs* reaching to each portico, by which the *guard* deſcended; for there was always lodged here *a Roman legion*, and, poſting themſelves in their armour in ſeveral places in the porticoes, they kept a watch on the people on the feaſt days *to prevent all diſorders*; for, as the temple was a guard to the city, ſo was Antonia to the temple."

XII. (p. 224.) Acts iv. 1. "And as they ſpake unto the people, the prieſts, and

the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them." Here we have a public officer, under the title of captain of the temple, and he probably a Jew, as he accompanied the prieſts and Sadducees in apprehending the apoſtles.

Joſ. de Bell. lib. ii. c. 17, ſec. 2. "And at the *temple* Eleazar, the ſon of Ananias the high prieſt, a young man of a bold and reſolute diſpoſition, then *captain*, perſuaded thoſe who performed the ſacred miniſtrations, not to receive the gift or ſacrifice of any ſtranger."

XIII. (p. 225.) Acts xxv. 12. "Then Feſtus, when he had conferred with the *council*, anſwered, Haſt thou appealed unto Ceſar? unto Ceſar ſhalt thou go." That it was uſual for the Roman preſidents to have a council, conſiſting of their friends, and other chief Romans in the province, appears expreſsly in the following paſſage of Cicero's oration againſt Verres:——"Illud negare poſſes, aut nunc negabis, te, concilio tuo dimiſſo,

miſſo, viris primariis, qui in conſilio C. Sacerdotis fuerant, tibique eſſe volebant, remotis, de re judicatâ judicâſſe?"

XIV. (p. 235.) Acts xvi. 13. "And (at Philippi) on the ſabbath, we went out of the city by a river ſide, where prayer was wont to be made," or where a proſeucha, oratory, or place of prayer, was allowed. The particularity to be remarked, is the ſituation of the place where prayer was wont to be made, viz. by a *river ſide*.

Philo, deſcribing the conduct of the Jews of Alexandria, upon a certain public occaſion, relates of them, that, "early in the morning, flocking out of the gates of the city, they go to the *neighbouring ſhores* (for the *proſeuchæ* were deſtroyed), and, ſtanding in a moſt pure place, they lift up their voices with one accord *."

Joſephus gives us a decree of the city of

* Philo in Flacc. p. 382.

Halicar-

Halicarnaſſus, permitting the Jews to build oratories, a part of which decree runs thus: —"We ordain that the Jews, who are willing, men and women, do obſerve the ſabbaths, and perform ſacred rites according to the Jewiſh laws, and *build oratories by the ſea-ſide* *."

Tertullian, among other Jewiſh rites and cuſtoms, ſuch as feaſts, ſabbaths, faſts, and unleavened bread, mentions "orationes *litorales*," that is, prayers by the river ſide †.

XV. (p. 255.) Acts xxvi. 5. "After the moſt *ſtraiteſt* ſect of our religion, I lived a Phariſee."

Joſ. de Bell. lib. i. c. 5, ſec. 2. "The Phariſees were reckoned the moſt religious of any of the Jews, and to be the moſt *exact* and ſkilful in explaining the laws."

In the original there is an agreement

* Joſ. Ant. lib. xiv. c. 10, ſec. 24.

† Tertul. ad Nat. lib. i. c. 13.

not

not only in the ſenſe but in the expreſſion, it being the ſame Greek adjective, which is rendered "ſtrait" in the Acts, and "exact" in Joſephus.

XVI. (p. 255.) Mark viii. 3, 4. "The Phariſees and all the Jews, except they waſh, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and many other things there be which they have received to hold."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xiii. c. 10, ſec. 6. "The Phariſees have delivered to the people many inſtitutions, as received from the fathers, which are not written in the law of Moſes."

XVII. (p. 259.) Acts xxiii. 8. "For the Sadducees ſay, that there is no reſurrection, neither angel, nor ſpirit; but the Phariſees confeſs both."

Joſ. de Bell. lib. ii. c. 8, ſec. 14. "They (the Phariſees) believe every ſoul to be immortal, but that the ſoul of the good only paſſes into another body, and the ſoul of

the wicked is puniſhed with eternal puniſhment." On the other hand, Ant. lib. xviii. c. 1, ſec. 4. "It is the opinion of the Sadducees that ſouls periſh with the bodies."

XVIII. (p. 268.) Acts v. 17. "Then the High Prieſt roſe up, and all they that were with him, which is the ſect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation." St. Luke here intimates that the High Prieſt was a Sadducee, which is a character one would not have expected to meet with in that ſtation. This circumſtance, remarkable as it is, was not however without examples.

Joſ. Ant. lib. xiii. c. 10, ſec. 6, 7. "John Hyrcanus, High Prieſt of the Jews, forſook the Phariſees upon a diſguſt, and joined himſelf to the party of the Sadducees." This High Prieſt died one hundred and ſeven years before the Chriſtian æra.

Again, (Ant. lib. xx. c. 8, ſec. 1.) "This Ananus the younger, who, as we have ſaid juſt

juſt now, had received the high prieſthood, was fierce and haughty in his behaviour, and above all men bold and daring; and, moreover, *was of the ſect of the Sadducees.*" This High Prieſt lived little more than twenty years after the tranſaction in the Acts.

XIX. (p. 282.) Luke ix. 51. "And it came to paſs, when the time was come that he ſhould be received up, he ſteadfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem, and ſent meſſengers before his face. And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him, and they did not receive him, becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xx. c. 5, ſec. 1. "It was the cuſtom of the Galileans, who went up to the holy city at the feaſts, to travel through the country of Samaria. As they were in their journey, ſome inhabitants of the village called Ginæa, which lies on the borders of Samaria and the great plain, falling

falling upon them, killed a great many of them."

XX. (p. 278.) John iv. 20. "Our fathers," ſaid the Samaritan woman, "worſhipped in *this mountain*, and ye ſay that Jeruſalem is the place where men ought to worſhip."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xviii. c. 5, ſec. 1. "Commanding them to meet him at *Mount Gerizim*, which is by them (the Samaritans) eſteemed the moſt ſacred of all mountains."

XXI. (p. 312.) Mat. xxvi. 3. "Then aſſembled together the chief prieſts, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the High Prieſt, *who was called Caiaphas.*" That Caiaphas was High Prieſt, and High Prieſt throughout the preſidentſhip of Pontius Pilate, and conſequently at this time, appears from the following account:—He was made High Prieſt by Valerius Gratus, *predeceſſor* of Pontius Pilate, and was removed from his office by Vitellius, preſi-

dent

dent of Syria, *after* Pilate was ſent away out of the province of Judea. Joſephus relates the *advancement* of Caiaphas to the high prieſthood in this manner: "Gratus gave the high prieſthood to Simon, the ſon of Camithus. He, having enjoyed this honour not above a year, was ſucceeded by Joſeph, *who is alſo called Caiaphas* *. After this Gratus went away for Rome, having been eleven years in Judea; and *Pontius Pilate came thither as his ſucceſſor*." Of the *removal* of Caiaphas from his office, Joſephus likewiſe afterwards informs us; and connects it with a circumſtance which fixes the time to a date ſubſequent to the determination of Pilate's government. "Vitellius (he tells us) ordered *Pilate to repair to Rome;* and *after that* went up himſelf to Jeruſalem, and then gave directions concerning ſeveral matters. And, having done theſe things, he took away the prieſthood from *the High Prieſt* Joſeph, who is called *Caiaphas* †."

* Ant. lib. xviii. c. 2, ſec. 2.

† Id. ib. c. 5, ſec. 3.

XXII.

XXII. (Michaelis, c. xi. ſec. 11.) Acts xxiii. 4. "And they that ſtood by ſaid, Revileſt thou God's High Prieſt? Then ſaid Paul, I wiſt not, brethren, that he was the High Prieſt." Now, upon enquiry into the hiſtory of the age, it turns out, that Ananias, of whom this is ſpoken, was, in truth, *not* the High Prieſt, though he was ſitting in judgement in that aſſumed capacity. The caſe was, that he had formerly held the office, and had been depoſed; that the perſon who ſucceeded him had been murdered; that another was not yet appointed to the ſtation; and that, during the vacancy, he had, of his own authority, taken upon himſelf the diſcharge of the office*. This ſingular ſituation of the high prieſthood took place during the interval between the death of Jonathan, who was murdered by order of Felix, and the acceſſion of Iſmael, who was inveſted with the high prieſthood by Agrippa; and preciſely in this interval it happened that St. Paul

* Joſ. Ant. l. xx. c. 5, ſec. 2. c. 6, ſec. 2. c. 9, ſec. 2.

was

was apprehended, and brought before the Jewiſh council.

XXIII. (p. 323.) Mat. xxvi. 59. "Now the *chief prieſts* and elders, and all the council, ſought falſe witneſs againſt him."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xviii. c. 15, ſec. 3, 4. "Then might be ſeen the *High Prieſts themſelves*, with aſhes on their heads, and their breaſts naked."

The agreement here conſiſts in ſpeaking of the high prieſts, or chief prieſts (for the name in the original is the ſame), in the *plural number*, when in ſtrictneſs there was only *one* High Prieſt: which may be conſidered as a proof, that the evangeliſts were habituated to the manner of ſpeaking then in uſe, becauſe they retain it when it is neither accurate nor juſt. For the ſake of brevity I have put down from Joſephus, only a ſingle example of the application of this title in the plural number; but it is his uſual ſtyle.

Ib. (p. 871.) Luke iii. 1. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Ceſar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, *Annas and Caiaphas being the High Prieſts*, the word of God came unto John." There is a paſſage in Joſephus very nearly parallel to this, and which may at leaſt ſerve to vindicate the evangeliſt from objection, with reſpect to his giving the title of High Prieſt ſpecifically to two perſons at the ſame time: "Quadratus ſent two others of the moſt powerful men of the Jews, as alſo the *High Prieſts Jonathan and Ananias* *." That Annas was a perſon in an eminent ſtation, and poſſeſſed an authority co-ordinate with, or next to that of the High Prieſt properly ſo called, may be inferred from St. John's goſpel, which, in the hiſtory of Chriſt's crucifixion, relates that "the ſoldiers led him away to Annas firſt †." And this might be noticed

* De Bell. lib. xi. c. 12, ſec. 6.
† xviii. 13.

as an example of undeſigned coincidence in the two evangeliſts.

Again, (p. 870.) Acts iv. 6. Annas is called the High Prieſt, though Caiaphas was in the office of the high prieſthood. In like manner in Joſephus*, "Joſeph the ſon of Gorion, and the High Prieſt Ananus, were choſen to be ſupreme governors of all things in the city." Yet Ananus, though here called the High Prieſt Ananus, was not then in the office of the high prieſthood. The truth is, there is an indeterminateneſs in the uſe of this title in the goſpel; ſometimes it is applied excluſively to the perſon who held the office at the time; ſometimes to one or two more, who probably ſhared with him ſome of the powers or functions of the office; and, ſometimes, to ſuch of the prieſts as were eminent by their ſtation or character†: and there is the very ſame indeterminateneſs in Joſephus.

* De Bell. ii. c. 20, ſec. 3.

† Mark xiv. 53.

XXIV. (p. 347.) John xix. 19, 20. "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the croſs." That ſuch was the cuſtom of the Romans upon theſe occaſions, appears from paſſages of Suetonius and Dio Caſſius: "Patrem familias—canibus objecit, cum hoc *titulo*, Impie locutus parmularius." Suet. Domit. cap. x. And in Dio Caſſius we have the following: "Having led him through the midſt of the court or aſſembly, *with a writing ſignifying the cauſe of his death*, and afterwards crucifying him." Book liv.

Ib. "And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." That it was alſo uſual, about this time, in Jeruſalem, to ſet up advertiſements in *different* languages, is gathered from the account which Joſephus gives of an expoſtulatory meſſage from Titus to the Jews, when the city was almoſt in his hands; in which he ſays, Did ye not erect pillars with inſcriptions on them, *in the Greek and in our language*, "Let no one paſs beyond theſe bounds?"

XXV.

XXV. (p. 352.) Mat. xxvii. 26. "When he had *ſcourged* Jeſus, he delivered him to be crucified."

The following paſſages occur in Joſephus:

"Being *beaten*, they were crucified oppoſite to the citadel *."

"Whom, having *firſt ſcourged with whips*, he crucified †."

"He was burnt alive, *having been firſt beaten* ‡."

To which may be added one from Livy, lib. xi. c. 5. "Productique omnes, *virgiſque cæſi*, ac ſecuri percuſſi."

A modern example may illuſtrate the uſe we make of this inſtance. The preceding

* P. 1247, 24 edit. Hudſ.
† P. 1080, 45 edit.
‡ P. 1327, 43 edit.

of a capital execution by the corporal puniſh-ment of the ſufferer, is a practice unknown in England, but retained, in ſome inſtances at leaſt, as appears by the late execution of a regicide, in Sweden. This circumſtance, therefore, in the account of an Engliſh execution purporting to come from an Engliſh writer, would not only bring a ſuſpicion upon the truth of the account, but would, in a conſiderable degree, impeach its preten-ſions of having been written by the author whoſe name it bore. Whereas the ſame circumſtance, in the account of a Swediſh execution, would verify the account, and ſupport the authenticity of the book in which it was found; or, at leaſt, would prove that the author, whoever he was, poſ-ſeſſed the information and the knowledge which he ought to poſſeſs.

XXVII. (p. 353.) John xix. 16. "And they took Jeſus, and led him away, and he, *bearing his croſs*, went forth."

Plutarch. De iis qui ſero puniuntur, p. 554.

A Paris,

A Paris, 1624. "Every kind of wickedneſs produces its own particular torment, juſt as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, *carries his own croſs.*"

XXVII. John xix. 32. "Then came the ſoldiers, and *brake the legs* of the firſt, and of the other which was crucified with him."

Conſtantine aboliſhed the puniſhment of the croſs; in commending which edict, a heathen writer notices this very circumſtance of *breaking the legs*: "Eo pius, ut etiam vetus veterrimumque ſupplicium, patibulum, et *cruribus ſuffringendis*, primus removerit." Aur. Vict. Cef. cap. xli.

XXVIII. (p. 457.) Acts iii. 1. "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the *ninth* hour."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xv. c. 7, ſec. 8. "Twice every day, in the morning, and at the *ninth*

hour, the priests perform their duty at the altar."

XXIX. (p. 462.) Acts xv. 21. "For Moses, of old time, hath, in every city, them that preach him, *being read in the synagogues every sabbath day*."

Jos. contra Ap. l. ii. "He (Moses) gave us the law, the most excellent of all institutions; nor did he appoint that it should be heard, once only, or twice, or often, but that, laying aside all other works, we should meet together *every week* to hear it *read*, and gain a perfect understanding of it."

XXX. (p. 465.) Acts xxi. 23. "We have four men, which have a *vow* on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, that they may *shave their heads*."

Jos. de Bell. l. xi. c. 15. "It is customary for those who have been afflicted with some distemper, or have laboured under any other difficulties, to make a *vow* thirty days before

before they offer ſacrifices, to abſtain from wine, and *ſhave the hair of their heads.*"

Ib. v. 24. "Them take, and purify thyſelf with them, and *be at charges with them that they may ſhave their heads.*"

Joſ. Ant. l. xix. c. 6. "He (Herod Agrippa) coming to Jeruſalem, offered up ſacrifices of thankſgiving, and omitted nothing that was preſcribed by the law. For which reaſon *he alſo ordered a good number of Nazarites to be ſhaved.*" We here find that it was an act of piety amongſt the Jews, to defray for thoſe who were under the Nazaritic vow the expences which attended its completion; and that the phraſe was, "that they might be ſhaved." The cuſtom and the expreſſion are both remarkable, and both in cloſe conformity with the ſcripture account.

XXXI. (p. 474.) 2 Cor. xi. 24. "Of the Jews five times received I forty ſtripes, *ſave one.*"

Joſ.

Joſ. Ant. iv. c. 8, ſec. 21. "He that acts contrary hereto, let him receive forty ſtripes, *wanting one*, from the public officer."

The coincidence here is ſingular, becauſe the law *allowed* forty ſtripes:—"Forty ſtripes he may give him, and not exceed." Deut. xxv. 3. It proves that the author of the epiſtle to the Corinthians was guided not by books, but by facts; becauſe his ſtatement agrees with the actual cuſtom, even when that cuſtom deviated from the written law, and from what he muſt have learnt by conſulting the Jewiſh code, as ſet forth in the Old Teſtament.

XXXII. (p. 490.) Luke iii. 12. "Then came alſo *publicans* to be baptiſed." From this quotation, as well as from the hiſtory of Levi or Matthew (Luke v. 29.), and of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 2.), it appears, that the publicans or tax-gatherers were, frequently at leaſt, if not always, Jews: which, as the country was then under a Roman government, and the taxes were paid to the Romans,

Romans, was a circumſtance not to be expected. That it was the truth however of the caſe, appears from a ſhort paſſage of Joſephus.

De Bell. lib. ii. c. 14, ſec. 45. "But Florus not reſtraining theſe practices by his authority, the chief men of the Jews, *among whom was John the publican*, not knowing well what courſe to take, wait upon Florus, and give him eight talents of ſilver to ſtop the building."

XXXIII. (p. 496.) Acts xxii. 25. "And, as they bound him with thongs, Paul ſaid unto the centurion that ſtood by, Is it lawful for you *to ſcourge a man that is a Roman*, and uncondemned?"

"Facinus eſt vinciri civem Romanum: ſcelus verberari." Cic. in Verr.

"Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Meſſanæ, civis Romanus, Judices: cum interea nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia, iſtius miſeri, inter

inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum, audiebatur, niſi hæc, *Civis Romanus ſum.*"

XXXIV. (p. 513.) Acts xxii. 27. "Then the chief captain came, and ſaid unto him (Paul), Tell me, Art thou a Roman? He ſaid, Yea." The circumſtance here to be noticed is, that a *Jew* was a Roman citizen.

Joſ. Ant. lib. xiv. c. 10, ſec. 13. "Lucius Lentulus, the conſul, declared, I have diſmiſſed from the ſervice *the Jewiſh Roman citizens*, who obſerve the rites of the Jewiſh religion at Epheſus."

Ib. v. 27. "And the chief captain anſwered, With *a great ſum obtained I this freedom.*"

Dio Caſſius, lib. lx. "This privilege, which had been *bought formerly at a great price*, became ſo cheap, that it was commonly ſaid, a man might be made a Roman citizen for a few pieces of broken glaſs."

XXXV.

XXXV. (p. 521.) Acts xxviii. 16. "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the priſoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was ſuffered to dwell by himſelf, with *a ſoldier that kept him.*"

With which join v. 20. "For the hope of Iſrael I am bound with *this chain.*"

"Quemadmodum eadem *catena* et cuſtodiam et *militem* copulat, ſic iſta, quæ tam diſſimilia ſunt, pariter incedunt." Seneca, ep. v.

"Proconſul æſtimare ſolet, utrum in carcerem recipienda ſit perſona, an *militi tradenda.*" Ulpian. l. i. ſec. De cuſtod. et exhib. reor.

In the confinement of Agrippa by the order of Tiberius, Antonia managed, that the centurion who preſided over the guards, and the *ſoldier to whom Agrippa was to be bound*, might be men of mild character. Joſ. Ant. lib. xviii. c. 7, ſec. 5. After the acceſ-

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ſion of Caligula, Agrippa alſo, like Paul, was ſuffered to dwell, yet as a priſoner, in his own houſe.

XXXVI. (p. 531.) Acts xxvii. 1. "And when it was determined that we ſhould ſail into Italy, they delivered Paul, *and certain other priſoners*, unto one named Julius." Since not only Paul, but certain other *priſoners*, were ſent by the ſame ſhip into Italy, the text muſt be conſidered as carrying with it an intimation, that the ſending of perſons from Judea to be tried at Rome, was an ordinary practice. That in truth it was ſo, is made out by a variety of examples which the writings of Joſephus furniſh; and, amongſt others, by the following, which comes near both to the time and the ſubject of the inſtance in the Acts. "Felix, for ſome ſlight offence, *bound and ſent to Rome* ſeveral prieſts of his acquaintance, and very good and honeſt men, to anſwer for themſelves to Ceſar." Joſ. in Vit. ſec. 3.

XXXVII. (p. 539.) Acts xi. 27. "And in

in theſe days came prophets from Jeruſalem unto Antioch; and there ſtood up one of them, named Agabus, and ſignified by the ſpirit that there ſhould be a great dearth throughout all the world (or all the country), *which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Ceſar.*"

Joſ. Ant. l. xx. c. 4, ſec. 2. "In their time (i. e. about the fifth or ſixth year of Claudius) a great dearth happened in Judea."

XXXVIII. (p. 555.) Acts xviii. 1, 2. "Becauſe that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome."

Suet. Claud. c. xxv. "Judæos, impulſore Chreſto aſſiduè tumultuantes, Româ expulit."

XXXIX. (p. 664.) Acts v. 37. "After this man roſe up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him."

Joſ. de Bell. l. vii. "He (viz. the perſon,

ſon, who in another place is called, by Joſephus, Judas the Galilean, or Judas of Galilee) perſuaded not a few not to enroll themſelves, when Cyrenius the cenſor was ſent into Judea."

XL. (p. 942.) Acts xxi. 38. "Art not thou that Egyptian which, before theſe days, madeſt an uproar, and leddeſt out into the wilderneſs four thouſand men that were murderers?"

Joſ. de Bell. l. ii. c. 13, ſec. 5. "But the Egyptian falſe prophet brought a yet heavier diſaſter upon the Jews; for this impoſtor, coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thouſand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderneſs, up to the Mount of Olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jeruſalem; but Felix, coming ſuddenly upon him with the Roman ſoldiers, prevented the attack.—A great number, or (as it ſhould rather be rendered) the greateſt

part of thoſe that were with him, were either ſlain or taken priſoners."

In theſe two paſſages, the deſignation of the impoſtor, an "Egyptian," without his proper name; "the wilderneſs;" his eſcape, though his followers were deſtroyed; the time of the tranſaction, in the preſidentſhip of Felix, which could not be any long time before the words in Luke are ſuppoſed to have been ſpoken; are circumſtances of cloſe correſpondency. There is one, and only one, point of diſagreement, and that is, in the number of his followers, which in the Acts are called four thouſand, and by Joſephus thirty thouſand: but, beſide that the names of numbers, more than any other words, are liable to the errors of tranſcribers, we are, in the preſent inſtance, under the leſs concern to reconcile the evangeliſt with Joſephus, as Joſephus is not, in this point, conſiſtent with himſelf. For whereas, in the paſſage here quoted, he calls the number thirty thouſand, and tells us that the greateſt part, or a great number (according as

his words are rendered) of thoſe that were with him, were deſtroyed; in his Antiquities, he repreſents four hundred to have been killed upon this occaſion, and two hundred taken priſoners*: which certainly was not the "greateſt part," nor "a great part," nor "a great number," out of thirty thouſand. It is probable alſo, that Lyſias and Joſephus ſpoke of the expedition in its different ſtages: Lyſias, of thoſe who followed the Egyptian out of Jeruſalem; Joſephus, of all who were collected about him afterwards, from different quarters.

XLI. (Lardner's Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies, vol. iii. p. 21.) Acts xvii. 22. "Then Paul ſtood in the midſt of Mars-hill, and ſaid, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too ſuperſtitious; for, as I paſſed by and beheld your devotions, *I found an altar with this inſcription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.* Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you."

* Lib. xx. c. 7, ſec. 6.

Diogenes

Diogenes Laërtius, who wrote about the year 210, in his hiſtory of Epimenides, who is ſuppoſed to have flouriſhed nearly ſix hundred years before Chriſt, relates of him the following ſtory: that, being invited to Athens for the purpoſe, he delivered the city from a peſtilence in this manner—"Taking ſeveral ſheep, ſome black, others white, he had them up to the Areopagus, and then let them go where they would, and gave orders to thoſe who followed them, wherever any of them ſhould lie down, to ſacrifice it to the god to whom it belonged; and ſo the plague ceaſed. Hence," ſays the hiſtorian, "it has come to paſs, *that, to this preſent time, may be found in the boroughs of the Athenians* ANONYMOUS *altars:* a memorial of the expiation then made*." Theſe altars, it may be preſumed, were called *anonymous*, becauſe there was not the name of any particular deity inſcribed upon them.

Pauſanias, who wrote before the end of

* In Epimenide, l. i. ſegm. 110.

the ſecond century, in his deſcription of Athens, having mentioned an altar of Jupiter Olympius, adds, "*And nigh unto it is an altar of unknown gods* *." And, in another place, he ſpeaks "*of altars of gods called unknown* †."

Philoſtratus, who wrote in the beginning of the third century, records it as an obſervation of Apollonius Tyanæus, "That it was wiſe to ſpeak well of all the gods, *eſpecially at Athens, where altars of unknown demons were erected* ‡."

The *author of the dialogue Philopatris*, by many ſuppoſed to have been Lucian, who wrote about the year 170, by others ſome anonymous heathen writer of the fourth century, makes Critias ſwear *by the unknown god of Athens*; and, near the end of the dialogue, has theſe words, "But let us find out *the unknown god at Athens*, and, ſtretching

* Pauſ. l. v. p. 412.

† Ib. l. i. p. 4.

‡ Philoſ. Apoll. Tyan. l. vi. c. 3.

our

our hands to heaven, offer to him our praiſes and thankſgivings*."

This is a very curious and a very important coincidence. It appears beyond controverſy, that altars with this inſcription were exiſting at Athens, at the time when St. Paul is alledged to have been there. It ſeems alſo, which is very worthy of obſervation, that this inſcription was *peculiar* to the Athenians. There is no evidence that there were altars inſcribed "to the unknown God" in any other country. Suppoſing the hiſtory of St. Paul to have been a fable, how is it poſſible that ſuch a writer as the author of the Acts of the Apoſtles was, ſhould hit upon a circumſtance ſo extraordinary, and introduce it by an alluſion ſo ſuitable to St. Paul's office and character?

The examples here collected will be ſufficient, I hope, to ſatisfy us, that the writers

* Lucian. in Philop. tom. ii. Græv. p. 767. 780.

of the Chriſtian hiſtory knew ſomething of what they were writing about. The argument is alſo ſtrengthened by the following conſiderations:

I. That theſe agreements appear, not only in articles of public hiſtory, but, ſometimes, in minute, recondite, and very peculiar circumſtances, in which, of all others, a forger is moſt likely to have been found tripping.

II. That the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which took place forty years after the commencement of the Chriſtian inſtitution, produced ſuch a change in the ſtate of the country, and the condition of the Jews, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumſtances of the nation *before* that event, would find it difficult to avoid miſtakes, in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of tranſactions connected with thoſe circumſtances, foraſmuch as he could no longer have a living exemplar to copy from.

III. That there appears, in the writers of the

the New Teſtament, a knowledge of the affairs of thoſe times, which we do not find in authors of later ages. In particular, many of the Chriſtian writers of the ſecond and third centuries, and of the following ages, had falſe notions concerning the ſtate of Judea, between the nativity of Jeſus and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem *." Therefore *they* could not have compoſed our hiſtories.

Amidſt ſo many conformities, we are not to wonder that we meet with ſome difficulties. The principal of theſe I will put down, together with the ſolutions which they have received. But in doing this I muſt be contented with a brevity better ſuited to the limits of my volume than to the nature of a controverſial argument. For the hiſtorical proofs of my aſſertions, and for the Greek criticiſms upon which ſome of them are founded, I refer the reader to the ſecond volume of the firſt part of Dr. Lardner's large work.

* Lard. part i. vol. ii. p. 960.

I. The taxing during which Jeſus was born, was "firſt made," as we read, according to our tranſlation, in St. Luke, "whilſt Cyrenius was governor of Syria *." Now it turns out that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until twelve, or, at the ſooneſt, ten years after the birth of Chriſt; and that a taxing, cenſus, or aſſeſſment, was made in Judea in the beginning of his government. The charge, therefore, brought againſt the evangeliſt is, that, intending to refer to this taxing, he has miſplaced the date of it by an error of ten or twelve years.

The anſwer to the accuſation is found in his uſing the word "firſt"—"And this taxing was *firſt* made;" for, according to the miſtake imputed to the evangeliſt, this word could have no ſignification whatever: it could have had no place in his narrative; becauſe, let it relate to what it will, taxing, cenſus, enrollment, or aſſeſſment, it imports that the writer had more than one of theſe

* Chap. ii. ver. 2.

in

in contemplation. It acquits him therefore of the charge, it is inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of his knowing only of the taxing in the beginning of Cyrenius's government. And if the evangeliſt knew, which this word proves that he did, of ſome other taxing beſide that, it is too much, for the ſake of convicting him of a miſtake, to lay it down as certain that he intended to refer to *that*.

The ſentence in St. Luke may be conſtrued thus: "This was the firſt aſſeſſment (or enrollment) of Cyrenius, governor of Syria*;" the words "governor of Syria" being uſed after the name of Cyrenius as his

* If the word which we render "firſt" be rendered "before," which it has been ſtrongly contended that the Greek idiom allows of, the whole difficulty vaniſhes; for then the paſſage would be—"Now this taxing was made before Cyrenius was governor of Syria;" which correſponds with the chronology. But I rather chooſe to argue, that, however the word "firſt" be rendered, to give it a meaning at all, it militates with the objection. In this I think there can be no miſtake.

addition

addition or title. And this title, belonging to him at the time of writing the account, was naturally enough ſubjoined to his name, though acquired after the tranſaction which the account deſcribes. A modern writer who was not very exact in the choice of his expreſſions, in relating the affairs of the Eaſt-Indies, might eaſily ſay, that ſuch a thing was done by *Governor* Haſtings, though, in truth, the thing had been done by him before his advancement to the ſtation from which he received the name of governor. And this, as we contend, is preciſely the inaccuracy which has produced the difficulty in St. Luke.

At any rate, it appears from the form of the expreſſion, that he had two taxings or enrollments in contemplation. And if Cyrenius had been ſent upon this buſineſs into Judea, before he became governor of Syria (againſt which ſuppoſition there is no proof, but rather external evidence of an enrollment going on about this time under ſome

perſon or other *), then the cenſus on all hands acknowledged to have been made by him in the beginning of his government, would form a ſecond, ſo as to occaſion the other to be called the *firſt*.

II. Another chronological objection ariſes upon a date aſſigned in the beginning of the third chapter of St. Luke †. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæſar—Jeſus *began to be about thirty* years of age; for, ſuppoſing Jeſus to have been born, as St. Matthew, and St. Luke alſo himſelf, relate, in the time of Herod, he muſt, according to the dates given in Joſephus and by the Roman hiſtorians, have

* Joſephus (Ant. xvii. c. 2, ſec. 6.) has this remarkable paſſage—"When therefore the whole Jewiſh nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæſar, and the intereſts of the king." This tranſaction correſponds in the courſe of the hiſtory with the time of Chriſt's birth. What is called a cenſus, and which we render taxing, was delivering upon oath an account of their property. This might be accompanied with an oath of fidelity, or might be miſtaken by Joſephus for it.

† Lard. part i. vol. ii. p. 768.

been

been at leaſt thirty-one years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If he was born, as St. Matthew's narrative intimates, one or two years before Herod's death, he would have been thirty-two or thirty-three years old at that time.

This is the difficulty: the ſolution turns upon an alteration in the conſtruction of the Greek. St. Luke's words in the original are allowed, by the general opinion of learned men, to ſignify, not "that Jeſus began to be about thirty years of age," but "that he was about thirty years of age when he began his miniſtry." This conſtruction being admitted, the adverb "about" gives us all the latitude we want, and more, eſpecially when applied, as it is in the preſent inſtance, to a decimal number; for ſuch numbers, even without this qualifying addition, are often uſed in a laxer ſenſe than is here contended for *.

III. Acts

* Livy, ſpeaking of the peace which the conduct of Romulus had procured to the ſtate during the *whole* reign

III. Acts v. 36. "For before theſe days roſe up Theudas, boaſting himſelf to be ſomebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themſelves; who was ſlain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were ſcattered and brought to nought."

Joſephus has preſerved the account of an impoſtor of the name of Theudas, who created ſome diſturbances, and was ſlain; but, according to the date aſſigned to this man's appearance (in which, however, it is very poſſible that Joſephus may have been miſtaken *), it muſt have been, at the leaſt, ſeven years after Gamaliel's ſpeech,

reign of his ſucceſſor† (Numa), has theſe words—"Ab illo enim profectis viribus datis tantum valuit, ut, in *quadraginta* deinde annos, tutam pacem haberet:" yet afterwards in the ſame chapter, "Romulus (he ſays) ſeptem et triginta regnavit annos, Numa tres et quadraginta."

* Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teſtament (Marſh's tranſlation), vol. i. p. 61.

† Liv. Hiſt. c. i. ſec. 16.

of which this text is a part, was delivered. It has been replied to the objection*, that there might be two impoſtors of this name: and it has been obſerved, in order to give a general probability to the ſolution, that the ſame thing appears to have happened in other inſtances of the ſame kind. It is proved from Joſephus, that there were not fewer than four perſons of the name of Simon within forty years, and not fewer than three of the name of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of inſurrections: and it is likewiſe recorded by this hiſtorian, that, upon the death of Herod the Great (which agrees very well with the time of the commotion referred to by Gamaliel, and with his manner of ſtating that time "before theſe days") there were innumerable diſturbances in Judea †. Archbiſhop Uſher was of opinion, that one of the three Judaſes above mentioned was Gamaliel's Theudas ‡; and that with a leſs varia-

* Lardner, part i. vol. ii. p. 922.
† Ant. l. xvii. c. 12, ſec. 4.
‡ Annals, p. 797.

tion

tion of the name than we actually find in the goſpels, where one of the twelve apoſtles is called, by Luke, Judas; and by Mark, Thaddeus *. Origen, however he came at his information, appears to have believed that there was an impoſtor of the name of Theudas before the nativity of Chriſt †.

IV. Matt. xxiii. 34. "Wherefore, behold, I ſend unto you prophets, and wiſe men, and ſcribes: and ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify; and ſome of them ſhall ye ſcourge in your ſynagogues, and perſecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood ſhed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of *Zacharias, ſon of Barachias, whom ye ſlew between the temple and the altar.*"

There is a Zacharias, whoſe death is related in the ſecond book of Chronicles, in

* Luke vi. 16. Mark iii. 18.

† Orig. con. Celſ. p. 44.

a man-

a manner which perfectly ſupports our Saviour's alluſion*. But this Zacharias was the ſon of *Jehoiada*.

There is alſo Zacharias the prophet; who was the ſon of Barachiah, and is ſo deſcribed in the ſuperſcription of his prophecy, but of whoſe death we have no account.

I have little doubt, but that the firſt Zacharias was the perſon ſpoken of by our Saviour; and that the name of the father has been ſince added, or changed, by ſome one, who took it from the title of the prophecy, which happened to be better known to him than the hiſtory in the Chronicles.

* "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the ſon of Jehoiada the prieſt, which ſtood above the people, and ſaid unto them, Thus ſaith God, Why tranſgreſs ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot proſper? Becauſe ye have forſaken the Lord, he hath alſo forſaken you. And they conſpired againſt him, *and ſtoned him with ſtones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the houſe of the Lord.*" 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

There

There is likewiſe a Zacharias, the ſon of Baruch, related by Joſephus to have been ſlain in the temple a few years before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. It has been inſinuated, that the words put into our Saviour's mouth contain a reference to this tranſaction, and were compoſed by ſome writer, who either confounded the time of the tranſaction with our Saviour's age, or inadvertently overlooked the anachroniſm.

Now ſuppoſe it to have been ſo; ſuppoſe theſe words to have been ſuggeſted by the tranſaction related in Joſephus, and to have been falſely aſcribed to Chriſt; and obſerve what extraordinary coincidences (accidentally, as it muſt in that caſe have been) attend the forger's miſtake.

Firſt, That we have a Zacharias in the book of Chronicles, whoſe death, and the manner of it, correſponds with the alluſion.

Secondly, that although the name of this perſon's father be erroneouſly put down in

the goſpel, yet we have a way of accounting for the error, by ſhewing another Zacharias in the Jewiſh ſcriptures, much better known than the former, whoſe patronymic was actually that which appears in the text.

Every one who thinks upon the ſubject, will find theſe to be circumſtances which could not have met together in a miſtake, which did not proceed from the circumſtances themſelves.

I have noticed, I think, all the difficulties of this kind. They are few; ſome of them admit of a clear, others of a probable ſolution. The reader will compare them with the number, the variety, the cloſeneſs, and the ſatisfactorineſs, of the inſtances which are to be ſet againſt them; and he will remember the ſcantineſs, in many caſes, of our intelligence, and that difficulties always attend imperfect information.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Undeſigned Coincidences.

BETWEEN the letters which bear the name of St. Paul in our collection, and his hiſtory in the Acts of the Apoſtles, there exiſt many notes of correſpondency. The ſimple peruſal of the writings is ſufficient to prove, that neither the hiſtory was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the hiſtory. And the *undeſignedneſs* of the agreements (which undeſignedneſs is gathered from their latency, their minuteneſs, their obliquity, the ſuitableneſs of the circumſtances in which they conſiſt, to the places in which thoſe circumſtances occur, and the circuitous references by which they are traced out) demonſtrates that they have not been produced by meditation, or by any fraudulent contrivance. But coincidences, from which theſe cauſes are excluded, and

which are too close and numerous to be accounted for by accidental concurrences of fiction, must necessarily have truth for their foundation.

This argument appeared to my mind of so much value (especially for its assuming nothing beside the existence of the books), that I have pursued it through St. Paul's thirteen epistles, in a work published by me four years ago under the title of Horæ Paulinæ. I am sensible how feebly any argument, which depends upon an induction of particulars, is represented without examples. On which account, I wished to have abridged my own volume, in the manner in which I have treated Dr. Lardner's in the preceding chapter. But, upon making the attempt, I did not find it in my power to render the articles intelligible by fewer words than I have there used. I must be content, therefore, to refer the reader to the work itself. And I would particularly invite his attention to the observations which are made in it upon the three first epistles.

I per-

I perſuade myſelf that he will find the proofs, both of agreement and undeſignedneſs, ſupplied by theſe epiſtles, ſufficient to ſupport the concluſion which is there maintained, in favour both of the genuineneſs of the writings, and the truth of the narrative.

It remains only, in this place, to point out how the argument *bears* upon the general queſtion of the Chriſtian hiſtory.

Firſt, St. Paul in theſe letters affirms, in unequivocal terms, his own performance of miracles, and, what ought particularly to be remembered, "*That miracles were the ſigns of an apoſtle* *." If this teſtimony come from St. Paul's own hand, it is invaluable. And that it does ſo, the argument before us fixes in my mind a firm aſſurance.

Secondly, it ſhows that the ſeries of action, repreſented in the epiſtles of St. Paul, was real; which alone lays a foundation

* Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.

for the propoſition which forms the ſubject of the firſt part of our preſent work, viz. that the original witneſſes of the Chriſtian hiſtory devoted themſelves to lives of toil, ſuffering, and danger, in conſequence of their belief of the truth of that hiſtory, and for the ſake of communicating the knowledge of it to others.

Thirdly, it proves that Luke, or whoever was the author of the Acts of the Apoſtles (for the argument does not depend upon the name of the author, though I know no reaſon for queſtioning it), was well acquainted with St. Paul's hiſtory; and that he probably was, what he profeſſes himſelf to be, a companion of St. Paul's travels: which, if true, eſtabliſhes, in a conſiderable degree, the credit even of his goſpel, becauſe it ſhows, that the writer, from his time, ſituation, and connections, poſſeſſed opportunities of informing himſelf truly concerning the tranſactions which he relates. I have little difficulty in applying to the Goſpel of St. Luke what is proved concerning the

Acts

Acts of the Apoſtles, conſidering them as two parts of the ſame hiſtory; for, though there are inſtances of *ſecond* parts being forgeries, I know none where the ſecond part is genuine, and the firſt not ſo.

I will only obſerve, as a ſequel of the argument, though not noticed in my work, the remarkable ſimilitude between the ſtyle of St. John's goſpel, and of St. John's firſt epiſtle. The ſtyle of St. John's is not at all the ſtyle of St. Paul's epiſtles, though both are very ſingular; nor is it the ſtyle of St. James's or of St. Peter's epiſtle: but it bears a reſemblance to the ſtyle of the goſpel inſcribed with St. John's name, ſo far as that reſemblance can be expected to appear which is not in ſimple narrative, ſo much as in reflections, and in the repreſentation of diſcourſes. Writings ſo circumſtanced, prove themſelves, and one another, to be genuine. This correſpondency is the more valuable, as the epiſtle itſelf aſſerts, in St. John's manner indeed, but in terms ſufficiently explicit, the writer's perſonal know-

ledge of Chriſt's hiſtory: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; that which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you*." Who would not deſire, who perceives not the value of an account, delivered by a writer ſo well informed as this?

* Ch. i. ver. 1. 3.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Hiſtory of the Reſurrection.

THE hiſtory of the reſurrection of Chriſt is a part of the evidence of Chriſtianity; but I do not know, whether the proper ſtrength of this paſſage of the Chriſtian hiſtory, or wherein its peculiar value, as a head of evidence, conſiſts, be generally underſtood. It is not that, as a miracle, the reſurrection ought to be accounted a more deciſive proof of ſupernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it ſtands in the Goſpels, it is better atteſted than ſome others; it is not for either of theſe reaſons, that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles, but for the following, viz. That it is completely certain that the apoſtles of Chriſt, and the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, aſſerted the fact. And this would have been certain, if the four Goſpels had been loſt, or never written. Every piece of ſcripture recognizes

cognizes the reſurrection. Every epiſtle of every apoſtle, every author contemporary with the apoſtles, of the age immediately ſucceeding the apoſtles, every writing from that age to the preſent, genuine or ſpurious, on the ſide of Chriſtianity or againſt it, concur in repreſenting the reſurrection of Chriſt as an article of his hiſtory, received without doubt or diſagreement by all who called themſelves Chriſtians, as alledged from the beginning by the propagators of the inſtitution, and alledged as the centre of their teſtimony. Nothing, I apprehend, which a man does not himſelf ſee or hear, can be more certain to him than this point. I do not mean that nothing can be more certain than that Chriſt roſe from the dead; but that nothing can be more certain, than that his apoſtles, and the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, gave out that he did ſo. In the other parts of the goſpel narrative, a queſtion may be made, whether the things related of Chriſt be the very things which the apoſtles and firſt teachers of the religion delivered concerning him? And this queſtion depends

a good

a good deal upon the evidence we poſſeſs of the genuineneſs, or rather, perhaps, of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. Upon the ſubject of the reſurrection, no ſuch diſcuſſion is neceſſary, becauſe no ſuch doubt can be entertained. The only points, which can enter into our conſideration, are, whether the apoſtles knowingly publiſhed a falſehood, or whether they were themſelves deceived; whether either of theſe ſuppoſitions be poſſible. The firſt, I think, is pretty generally given up. The nature of the undertaking, and of the men; the extreme unlikelihood that ſuch men ſhould engage in ſuch a meaſure as a *ſcheme*; their perſonal toils and dangers and ſufferings in the cauſe; their appropriation of their whole time to the object; the warm and ſeemingly unaffected zeal and earneſtneſs with which they profeſs their ſincerity, exempt their memory from the ſuſpicion of impoſture. The ſolution more deſerving of notice, is that which would reſolve the conduct of the apoſtles into *enthuſiaſm*; which would claſs the evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection with the

the numerous ſtories that are extant of the apparitions of dead men. There are circumſtances in the narrative, as it is preſerved in our hiſtories, which deſtroy this compariſon entirely. It was not one perſon, but many, who ſaw him; they ſaw him not only ſeparately, but together, not only by night but by day, not at a diſtance but near, not once but ſeveral times; they not only ſaw him, but touched him, converſed with him, ate with him, examined his perſon to ſatisfy their doubts. Theſe particulars are deciſive: but they ſtand, I do admit, upon the credit of our records. I would anſwer, therefore, the inſinuation of enthuſiaſm, by a circumſtance which ariſes out of the nature of the thing; and the reality of which muſt be confeſſed by all who allow, what I believe is not denied, that the reſurrection of Chriſt, whether true or falſe, was aſſerted by his diſciples from the beginning: and that circumſtance is, the non-production of the dead body. It is related in the hiſtory, what indeed the ſtory of the reſurrection neceſſarily implies, that the

corpſe

corpſe was miſſing out of the ſepulchre: it is related alſo in the hiſtory, that the Jews reported that the followers of Chriſt had ſtolen it away *. And this account, though loaded with great improbabilities, ſuch as the ſituation of the diſciples, their fears for their own ſafety at the time, the unlikelihood of their expecting to ſucceed, the difficulty of actual ſucceſs †, and the inevitable

* "And this ſaying," St. Matthew writes, "is commonly reported amongſt the Jews until this day." (xxviii. 15.) The evangeliſt may be thought good authority as to this point, even by thoſe who do not admit his evidence in every other point: and this point is ſufficient to prove that the body was miſſing.

It has alſo been rightly, I think, obſerved by Dr. Townſhend (Diſ. upon the Reſ. p. 16.), that the ſtory of the guards carried colluſion upon the face of it:— "His diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away, while we ſlept." Men in their circumſtances would not have made ſuch an acknowledgement of their negligence, without previous aſſurances of protection and impunity.

† "Eſpecially at the full moon, the city full of people, many probably paſſing the whole night, as Jeſus and his diſciples had done, in the open air, the ſepulchre ſo near the city as to be now incloſed within the walls." Prieſtley on the Reſur. p. 24.

conſe-

conſequence of detection and failure, was, nevertheleſs, the moſt credible account that could be given of the matter. But it proceeds entirely upon the ſuppoſition of fraud, as all the old objections did. What account can be given of the *body*, upon the ſuppoſition of enthuſiaſm? It is impoſſible our Lord's followers could believe that he was riſen from the dead, if his corpſe was lying before them. No enthuſiaſm ever reached to ſuch a pitch of extravagancy as that: a ſpirit may be an illuſion; a body is a real thing, an object of ſenſe, in which there can be no miſtake. All accounts of ſpectres leave the body in the grave. And, although the body of Chriſt might be removed by *fraud*, and for the purpoſes of fraud, yet, without any ſuch intention, and by ſincere but deluded men, which is the repreſentation of the apoſtolic character we are now examining, no ſuch attempt could be made. The preſence and the abſence of the dead body are alike inconſiſtent with the hypotheſis of enthuſiaſm: for, if preſent, it muſt have cured their enthuſiaſm at once; if abſent,

ſent, fraud, not enthuſiaſm, muſt have carried it away.

But further, if we admit, upon the concurrent teſtimony of all the hiſtories, ſo much of the account as ſtates that the religion of Jeſus was ſet up at Jeruſalem, and ſet up with aſſerting, in the very place in which he had been buried, and a few days after he had been buried, his reſurrection out of the grave, it is evident that, if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it, as the ſhorteſt and completeſt anſwer poſſible to the whole ſtory. The attempt of the apoſtles could not have ſurvived this refutation a moment. If we alſo admit, upon the authority of St. Matthew, that the Jews were advertiſed of the expectation of Chriſt's followers, and that they had taken due precaution in conſequence of this notice, and that the body was in marked and public cuſtody, the obſervation receives more force ſtill. For, notwithſtanding their precaution, and although thus prepared and forewarned; when the ſtory

lievers then in Jeruſalem, we have no reaſon to be ſurpriſed that ſo ſmall a company ſhould aſſemble; for there is no proof that the followers of Chriſt were yet formed into a ſociety, that the ſociety was reduced into any order, that it was at this time even underſtood that a new religion (in the ſenſe which that term conveys to us) was to be ſet up in the world, or how the profeſſors of that religion were to be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind. The death of Chriſt had left, we may ſuppoſe, the generality of his diſciples in great doubt, both as to what they were to do, and concerning what was to follow.

This meeting was held, as we have already ſaid, a few days after Chriſt's aſcenſion; for, ten days after that event was the day of pentecoſt, when, as our hiſtory relates *, upon a ſignal diſplay of divine agency attending the perſons of the apoſtles, there were added to the ſociety "about

* Acts ii. 1.

three

three thouſand ſouls *." But here, it is not, I think, to be taken, that theſe three thouſand were all converted by this ſingle miracle; but rather that many, who were before believers in Chriſt, became now profeſſors of Chriſtianity: that is to ſay, when they found that a religion was to be eſtabliſhed, a ſociety formed and ſet up in the name of Chriſt, governed by his laws, avowing their belief in his miſſion, united amongſt themſelves, and ſeparated from the reſt of the world, by viſible diſtinctions; in purſuance of their former conviction, and by virtue of what they had heard and ſeen and known of Chriſt's hiſtory, they publicly became members of it.

We read in the fourth † chapter of the Acts, that, ſoon after this, "the number of the men," *i. e.* of the ſociety openly profeſſing their belief in Chriſt, "was about five thouſand." So that here is an increaſe of two thouſand within a very ſhort time. And it is probable that there were many,

* Acts ii. 41. † Verſe 4.

both now and afterwards, who, although they believed in Chriſt, did not think it neceſſary to join themſelves to this ſociety; or who waited to ſee what was likely to become of it. Gamaliel, whoſe advice to the Jewiſh council is recorded Acts iv. 34, appears to have been of this deſcription; perhaps Nicodemus, and perhaps alſo Joſeph of Arimathea. This claſs of men, their character and their rank, are likewiſe pointed out by St. John, in the twelfth chapter of his goſpel: "Nevertheleſs among the chief rulers alſo many believed on him; but becauſe of the Phariſees they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue: for they loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God." Perſons ſuch as theſe, might admit the miracles of Chriſt, without being immediately convinced that they were under obligation to make a public profeſſion of Chriſtianity, at the riſk of all that was dear to them in life, and even of life itſelf*.

Chriſtianity,

* "Beſide thoſe who profeſſed, and thoſe who rejected and oppoſed, Chriſtianity, there were, in all probability,

Chriſtianity, however, proceeded to increaſe in Jeruſalem by a progreſs equally rapid with its firſt ſucceſs; for, in the next * chapter of our hiſtory, we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, *multitudes* both of men and women." And

bability, multitudes between both, neither perfect Chriſtians, nor yet unbelievers. They had a favourable opinion of the goſpel, but worldly conſiderations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumſtances which inclined them to think that Chriſtianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniences which attended the open profeſſion of it; and they could not find in themſelves courage enough to bear them, to diſoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to loſe their reputation, their liberty and their life, for the ſake of the new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope, that if they endeavoured to obſerve the great principles of morality, which Chriſt had repreſented as the principal part, the ſum and ſubſtance of religion; if they thought honourably of the goſpel, if they offered no injury to the Chriſtians, if they did them all the ſervices that they could *ſafely* perform, they were willing to hope that God would accept this, and that he would excuſe and forgive the reſt." Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſt. Rel. p. 91, ed. 4.

* Acts v. 14.

this enlargement of the new ſociety appears in the firſt verſe of the ſucceeding chapter, wherein we are told, that, "when the number of the diſciples was *multiplied*, there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews becauſe their widows were neglected *;" and, afterwards in the ſame chapter, it is declared expreſsly, that "the number of the diſciples multiplied in Jeruſalem greatly, and that a great company of the prieſts were obedient to the faith."

This I call the firſt period in the propagation of Chriſtianity. It commences with the aſcenſion of Chriſt; and extends, as may be collected from incidental notes of time †, to ſomething more than one year after that event. During which term the preaching of Chriſtianity, ſo far as our documents inform us, was confined to the ſingle city of Jeruſalem. And how did it ſucceed there? The firſt aſſembly which we

* Acts vi. 1.

† Vide Pearſon's Antiq. l. xviii. c. 7. Benſon's Hiſt. of Chriſt. book i. p. 148.

meet

meet with of Chriſt's diſciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, conſiſted of "one hundred and twenty." About a week after this "three thouſand were added in one day; and the number of Chriſtians, publicly baptiſed, and publicly aſſociating together, was very ſoon increaſed to "five thouſand." "Multitudes both of men and women continued to be added:" "diſciples multiplied greatly," and "many of the Jewiſh prieſthood, as well as others, became obedient to the faith;" and this within a ſpace of leſs than two years from the commencement of the inſtitution.

By reaſon of a perſecution raiſed againſt the church at Jeruſalem, the converts were driven from that city, and diſperſed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria *. Wherever they came, they brought their religion with them; for our hiſtorian informs us †, that "they, that were ſcattered abroad, went every where preaching the word."

* Acts viii. 1. † Verſe 4.

The effect of this preaching comes afterwards to be noticed, where the hiſtorian is led, in the courſe of his narrative, to obſerve, that *then (i. e.* about three years * poſterior to this) " the churches had reſt throughout all Judea, and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt, were multiplied." This was the work of the ſecond period, which compriſes about four years.

Hitherto the preaching of the goſpel had been confined to Jews, to Jewiſh proſelytes, and to Samaritans. And I cannot forbear from ſetting down, in this place, an obſervation of Mr. Byrant's, which appears to me to be perfectly well founded :— " The Jews ſtill remain, but how ſeldom is it that we can make a ſingle proſelyte! There is reaſon to think, that there were more converted by the apoſtles in one day, than have

* Benſon, book i. p. 207.

ſince

ſince been won over in the laſt thouſand years *."

It was not yet known to the apoſtles, that they were at liberty to propoſe the religion to mankind at large. That "myſtery," as St. Paul calls it †, and as it then was, was revealed to Peter by an eſpecial miracle. It appears to have been ‡ about ſeven years after Chriſt's aſcenſion, that the goſpel was preached to the Gentiles of Ceſarea. A year after this, a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch in Syria. The expreſſions employed by the hiſtorian are theſe—"A great number believed, and turned to the Lord;" "much people was added unto the Lord;" "the apoſtles Barnabas and Paul taught much people §." Upon Herod's death, which happened in the next year ‖, it is obſerved that "the word of God grew

* Bryant on the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 112.

† Eph. iii. 3—6.

‡ Benſon, b. ii. p. 236.

§ Acts xi. 21. 24. 26.

‖ Benſon, b. ii. p. 289.

and

and multiplied *." Three years from this time, upon the preaching of Paul at Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, " a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed †;" and afterwards, in the courſe of this very progreſs, he is repreſented as " making many diſciples" at Derbe, a principal city in the ſame diſtrict. Three years ‡ after this, which brings us to ſixteen after the aſcenſion, the apoſtles wrote a public letter from Jeruſalem to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, with which letter Paul travelled through theſe countries, and found the churches " eſtabliſhed in the faith, and increaſing in number daily §." From Aſia the apoſtle proceeded into Greece, where, ſoon after his arrival in Macedonia, we find him at Theſſalonica; in which city " ſome of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude ‖." We meet alſo here with an

* Acts xii. 24. † Ib. xiv. 1.
‡ Benſon's Hiſt. Chriſt. b. iii. p. 50.
§ Acts xvi. 5. ‖ Ib. xvii. 4.

accidental hint of the general progreſs of the Chriſtian miſſion, in the exclamation of the tumultuous Jews of Theſſalonica, "that they, who had turned the world upſide down, were come thither alſo *." At Berea, the next city at which St. Paul arrives, the hiſtorian, who was preſent, informs us that *many* of the Jews believed †." The next year and half of St. Paul's miniſtry was ſpent at Corinth. Of his ſucceſs in that city we receive the following intimations: "that *many* of the Corinthians believed and were baptiſed," and "that it was revealed to the apoſtle by Chriſt, that he had *much* people in that city ‡." Within leſs than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five § years after the aſcenſion, St. Paul fixed his ſtation at Epheſus, for the ſpace of two years ‖ and ſomething more. The effect of his miniſtry in that city and neighbourhood drew from the hiſtorian a reflection, "how mightily grew the word of God and

* Acts v. 6. † Ib. xvii. 12. ‡ Ib. xviii. 8—10.
§ Benſon, b. iii. p. 160. ‖ Acts xix. 10.

pre-

prevailed*." And at the concluſion of this period, we find Demetrius at the head of a party, who were alarmed by the progreſs of the religion, complaining, that "not only at Epheſus, but alſo throughout all Aſia, (*i. e.* the province of Lydia, and the country adjoining to Epheſus) this Paul hath perſuaded and turned away much people †." Beſide theſe accounts, there occurs, incidentally, mention of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi.

This is the third period in the propagation of Chriſtianity, ſetting off in the ſeventh year after the aſcenſion, and ending at the twenty-eighth. Now, lay theſe three periods together, and obſerve how the progreſs of the religion by theſe accounts is repreſented. The inſtitution, which properly *began* only after its author's removal from the world, before the end of thirty years had ſpread itſelf through Judea, Ga-

* Acts xix, 20. † Ib. ver. 26.

lilee,

lilee, and Samaria, almoſt all the numerous diſtricts of the Leſſer Aſia, through Greece, and the iſlands of the Ægean Sea, the ſea coaſt of Africa, and had extended itſelf to Rome, and into Italy. At Antioch in Syria, at Joppa, Epheſus, Corinth, Theſſalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Antioch in Piſidia, at Lydda, Saron, the number of converts is intimated by the expreſſions "a great number," "great multitudes," "much people." Converts are mentioned, without any deſignation of their number*, at Tyre, Ceſarea, Troas, Athens, Philippi, Lyſtra, Da-

* Conſidering the extreme conciſeneſs of many parts of the hiſtory, the ſilence about the numbers of converts is no proof of their paucity; for at Philippi no mention whatever is made of the number, yet St. Paul addreſſed an epiſtle to that church. The churches of Galatia, and the affairs of thoſe churches, were conſiderable enough to be the ſubject of another letter, and of much of St. Paul's ſolicitude; yet no account is preſerved in the hiſtory of his ſucceſs, or even of his preaching in that country, except the ſlight notice which theſe words convey:—"When they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, they eſſayed to go into Bithynia." Acts xvi. 6.

maſcus. During all this time, Jeruſalem continued not only the centre of the miſſion, but a principal ſeat of the religion; for, when St. Paul returned thither at the concluſion of the period of which we are now conſidering the accounts, the other apoſtles pointed out to him, as a reaſon for his compliance with their advice, "how many thouſands (myriads, ten thouſands) there were in that city who believed*."

Upon this abſtract, and the writing from which it is drawn, the following obſervations ſeem material to be made:

I. That the account comes from a perſon, who was himſelf concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it; who viſited Jeruſalem, and frequented the ſociety of thoſe who had acted, and were acting, the chief parts in the tranſaction. I lay down this point poſitive-

* Acts xxi. 20.

ly;

ly; for, had the ancient atteſtations to this valuable record been leſs ſatisfactory than they are, the unaffectedneſs and ſimplicity with which the author notices his preſence upon certain occaſions, and the entire abſence of art and deſign from theſe notices, would have been ſufficient to perſuade my mind, that, whoever he was, he actually lived in the times, and occupied the ſituation, in which he repreſents himſelf to be. When I ſay "whoever he was," I do not mean to caſt a doubt upon the name to which antiquity hath aſcribed the Acts of the Apoſtles (for there is no cauſe, that I am acquainted with, for queſtioning it), but to obſerve, that, in ſuch a caſe as this, the time and ſituation of the author is of more importance than his name; and that *theſe* appear from the work itſelf, and in the moſt unſuſpicious form.

II. That this account is a very *incomplete* account of the preaching and propagation of Chriſtianity; I mean, that, if what we read in the hiſtory be true, much more than

than what the hiſtory contains muſt be true alſo. For, although the narrative from which our information is derived has been entitled the Acts of the Apoſtles, it is in fact a hiſtory of the twelve apoſtles only during a ſhort time of their continuing together at Jeruſalem; and even of this period the account is very conciſe. The work afterwards conſiſts of a few important paſſages of Peter's miniſtry, of the ſpeech and death of Stephen, of the preaching of Philip the deacon; and the ſequel of the volume, that is, two thirds of the whole, is taken up with the converſion, the travels, the diſcourſes and hiſtory of the new apoſtle Paul, in which hiſtory alſo large portions of time are often paſſed over with very ſcanty notice.

III. That the account, ſo far as it goes, is for this very reaſon more credible. Had it been the author's deſign to have *diſplayed* the early progreſs of Chriſtianity, he would undoubtedly have collected, or, at leaſt, have ſet forth, accounts of the preaching of the reſt of the apoſtles, who cannot, without extreme

treme improbability, be ſuppoſed to have remained ſilent and inactive, or not to have met with a ſhare of that ſucceſs which attended their colleagues. To which may be added, as an obſervation of the ſame kind,

IV. That the intimations of the number of converts, and of the ſucceſs of the preaching of the apoſtles, come out for the moſt part *incidentally*; are drawn from the hiſtorian by the occaſion; ſuch as the murmuring of the Grecian converts, the reſt from perſecution, Herod's death, the ſending of Barnabas to Antioch and Barnabas calling Paul to his aſſiſtance, Paul coming to a place and finding there diſciples, the clamour of the Jews, the complaint of artificers intereſted in the ſupport of the popular religion, the reaſon aſſigned to induce Paul to give ſatisfaction to the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem. Had it not been for theſe occaſions, it is probable that no notice whatever would have been taken of the number of converts, in ſeveral of the paſſages in which that notice now appears. All this tends to remove

the ſuſpicion of a deſign to exaggerate or deceive.

PARALLEL TESTIMONIES with the hiſtory, are the letters which have come down to us of St. Paul, and of the other apoſtles. Thoſe of St. Paul are addreſſed to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Theſſalonica, the church of Galatia, and, if the inſcription be right, of Epheſus, his miniſtry at all which places is recorded in the hiſtory; to the church of Coloſſe, or rather to the churches of Coloſſe and Laodicea jointly, which he had not then viſited. They recognize by reference the churches of Judea, the churches of Aſia, and "all the churches of the Gentiles *." In the epiſtle † to the Romans, the author is led to deliver a remarkable declaration concerning the extent of his preaching, its efficacy, and the cauſe to which he aſcribes it, "to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty ſigns and wonders, by the power of

* 1 Theſſ. ii. 14. † Rom. xv. 18, 19.

the

the Spirit of God; ſo that from Jeruſalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the goſpel of Chriſt." In the epiſtle to the Coloſſians *, we find an oblique but very ſtrong ſignification of the then general ſtate of the Chriſtian miſſion, at leaſt as it appeared to St. Paul: "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and ſettled, and be not moved away from the hope of the goſpel, which ye have heard, and *which was preached to every creature which is under heaven*;" which goſpel, he had reminded them near the beginning † of his letter, "was preſent with them *as it was in all the world.*" The expreſſions are hyperbolical; but they are hyperboles which could only be uſed by a writer who entertained a ſtrong ſenſe of the ſubject. The firſt epiſtle of Peter accoſts the Chriſtians diſperſed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia and Bithynia.

It comes next to be conſidered, how far

* Col. i. 23. † Ib. i. 6.

theſe accounts are confirmed, or followed up, by other evidence.

Tacitus, in delivering a relation, which has already been laid before the reader, of the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, which coincides with the thirtieth year after Chriſt's aſcenſion, aſſerts, that the emperor, in order to ſuppreſs the rumours of having been himſelf the author of the miſchief, procured the Chriſtians to be accuſed. Of which Chriſtians, thus brought into his narrative, the following is ſo much of the hiſtorian's account as belongs to our preſent purpoſe: "They had their denomination from Chriſtus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious ſuperſtition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and ſpread not only over Judea, but reached the city alſo. At firſt they only were apprehended who confeſſed themſelves of that ſect; afterwards *a vaſt multitude* were diſcovered by them." This teſtimony to the early propagation of Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity is extremely material. It is from an hiſtorian of great reputation, living near the time; from a ſtranger and an enemy to the religion: and it joins immediately with the period through which the ſcripture accounts extend. It eſtabliſhes theſe points, that the religion began at Jeruſalem, that it ſpread throughout Judea, that it had reached Rome, and not only ſo, but that it had there obtained a great number of converts. This was about ſix years after the time that St. Paul wrote his epiſtle to the Romans, and ſomething more than two years after he arrived there himſelf. The converts to the religion were then ſo numerous at Rome, that of thoſe who were betrayed by the information of the perſons firſt perſecuted, a great multitude (multitudo ingens) were diſcovered and ſeized.

It ſeems probable, that the temporary check which Tacitus repreſents Chriſtianity to have received (repreſſa in præſens) referred to the perſecution at Jeruſalem, which followed the death of Stephen (Acts viii.);

and which, by diſperſing the converts, cauſed the inſtitution, in ſome meaſure, to diſappear. Its ſecond eruption at the ſame place, and within a ſhort time, has much in it of the character of truth. It was the firmneſs and perſeverance of men who knew what they relied upon.

Next in order of time, and perhaps ſuperior in importance, is the teſtimony of Pliny the younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two conſiderable diſtricts in the northern part of Aſia Minor. The ſituation in which he found his province led him to apply to the emperor (Trajan) for his direction as to the conduct he was to hold towards the Chriſtians. The letter in which this application is contained was written not quite eighty years after Chriſt's aſcenſion. The preſident, in this letter, ſtates the meaſures he had already purſued, and then adds, as his reaſon for reforting to the emperor's counſel and authority, the following words:— "Suſpending all judicial proceedings, I have recourſe to you

you for advice; for it has appeared to me a matter highly deſerving conſideration, eſpecially upon account of the great number of perſons who are in danger of ſuffering: for many of all ages, and of every rank, of both ſexes likewiſe, are accuſed, and will be accuſed. Nor has the contagion of this ſuperſtition ſeized cities only, but the leſſer towns alſo, and the open country. Nevertheleſs it ſeemed to me that it may be reſtrained and corrected. It is certain, that the temples, which were almoſt forſaken, begin to be more frequented; and the ſacred ſolemnities, after a long intermiſſion, are revived. Victims, likewiſe, are everywhere (paſſim) bought up; whereas, for ſome time, there were few to purchaſe them. Whence it is eaſy to imagine, what numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to thoſe that ſhall repent *."

It is obvious to obſerve, that the paſſage of Pliny's letter, here quoted, proves, not

* C. Plin. Trajano Imp. lib. x. ep. xcvii.

only that the Chriſtians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had ſubſiſted there for ſome conſiderable time. "It is certain (he ſays) that the temples, which were almoſt forſaken (plainly aſcribing this deſertion of the popular worſhip to the prevalency of Chriſtianity), begin to be more frequented; and the ſacred ſolemnities, after a *long* intermiſſion, are revived." There are alſo two clauſes in the former part of the letter which indicate the ſame thing; one, in which he declares that he had "never been preſent at any trials of Chriſtians, and therefore knew not what was the uſual ſubject of enquiry and puniſhment, or how far either was wont to be urged: the ſecond clauſe is the following: "Others were named by an informer, who, at firſt, confeſſed themſelves Chriſtians, and afterwards denied it; the reſt ſaid, they had been Chriſtians, ſome three years ago, ſome longer, and ſome above twenty years." It is alſo apparent that Pliny ſpeaks of the Chriſtians as a deſcription of men well known to the perſon to whom he writes.

His

His firſt ſentence concerning them is, "I have never been preſent at the trials of Chriſtians." This mention of the name of Chriſtians, without any preparatory explanation, ſhews that it was a term familiar both to the writer of the letter, and the perſon to whom it was addreſſed. Had it not been ſo, Pliny would naturally have begun his letter by informing the emperor, that he had met with a certain ſet of men in the province called Chriſtians.

Here then is a very ſignal evidence of the progreſs of the Chriſtian religion in a ſhort ſpace. It was not fourſcore years after the crucifixion of Jeſus when Pliny wrote this letter; nor ſeventy years ſince the apoſtles of Jeſus began to mention his name to the Gentile world. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great diſtance from Judea, the centre from which the religion ſpread; yet in theſe provinces Chriſtianity had long ſubſiſted, and Chriſtians were now in ſuch numbers as to lead the Roman governor to report to the emperor, that they were found, not only in

in cities, but in villages and in open countries; of all ages, of every rank and condition; that they abounded ſo much as to have produced a viſible deſertion of the temples; that beaſts brought to market for victims had few purchaſers; that the ſacred ſolemnities were much neglected: circumſtances noted by Pliny, for the expreſs purpoſe of ſhewing to the emperor the effect and prevalency of the new inſtitution.

No evidence remains, by which it can be proved that the Chriſtians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire; nor has any reaſon been offered to ſhew why they ſhould be ſo. Chriſtianity did not begin in theſe countries, nor near them. I do not know, therefore, that we ought to confine the deſcription in Pliny's letter to the ſtate of Chriſtianity in thoſe provinces, even if no other account of the ſame ſubject had come down to us; but, certainly, this letter may fairly be applied in aid and confirmation of the repreſentations given of the general ſtate of

of Chriſtianity in the world, by Chriſtian writers of that and the next ſucceeding age.

Juſtin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny, and one hundred and ſix after the aſcenſion, has theſe remarkable words: "There is not a nation, either of Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of thoſe who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongſt whom prayers and thankſgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the univerſe by the name of the crucified Jeſus*." Tertullian, who comes about fifty years after Juſtin, appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in theſe terms: "We were but of yeſterday, and we have filled your cities, iſlands, towns and boroughs, the camp, the ſenate, and the forum. They (the heathen adverſaries of Chriſtianity) lament, that every ſex, age and condition, and perſons of every rank alſo, are converts to that name †." I do allow that theſe expreſſions are looſe, and

* Dial. cum Tryph. † Tertull. Apol. c. 37.

may

may be called declamatory. But even declamation hath its bounds: this public boasting upon a ſubject which muſt be known to every reader was not only uſeleſs but unnatural, unleſs the truth of the caſe, in a conſiderable degree, correſponded with the deſcription; at leaſt unleſs it had been both true and notorious, that great multitudes of Chriſtians, of all ranks and orders, were to be found in moſt parts of the Roman empire. The ſame Tertullian, in another paſſage, by way of ſetting forth the extenſive diffuſion of Chriſtianity, enumerates as belonging to Chriſt, beſide many other countries, the "Moors and Gætulians of Africa, the borders of Spain, ſeveral nations of France, and parts of Britain inacceſſible to the Romans, the Sarmatians, Daci, Germans, and Scythians*;" and, which is more material than the extent of the inſtitution, the *number* of Chriſtians in the ſeveral countries in which it prevailed, is thus expreſſed by him; "Although ſo great a multitude that in

* Ad Jud. c. 7.

almoſt

almoſt every city we form the greater part, we paſs our time modeſtly and in ſilence *." Clement Alexandrinus, who preceded Tertullian by a few years, introduces a compariſon between the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, and that of the moſt celebrated philoſophical inſtitutions. "The philoſophers were confined to Greece, and to their particular retainers; but the doctrine of the Maſter of Chriſtianity did not remain in Judea, as philoſophy did in Greece, but is ſpread throughout the whole world, in every nation and village and city, both of Greeks and Barbarians, converting both whole houſes and ſeparate individuals, having already brought over to the truth not a few of the philoſophers themſelves. If the Greek philoſophy be prohibited, it immediately vaniſhes; whereas, from the firſt preaching of *our* doctrine, kings and tyrants, governors and preſidents, with their whole train, and with the populace on their ſide, have endeavoured with their whole might to exterminate it,

* Ad Scap. c. III.

yet,

yet doth it flouriſh more and more *." Origen, who follows Tertullian at the diſtance of only thirty years, delivers nearly the ſame account: "In every part of the world (ſays he), throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there are innumerable and immenſe multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country, and thoſe whom they eſteemed gods, have given themſelves up to the law of Moſes, and the religion of Chriſt; and this, not without the bittereſt reſentment from the idolaters, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and ſometimes to death; and it is wonderful to obſerve, how, in ſo ſhort a time, the religion has increaſed, amidſt puniſhment and death, and every kind of torture †." In another paſſage, Origen draws the following candid compariſon between the ſtate of Chriſtianity in his time, and the condition of its more primitive ages:—"By the good providence of God the Chriſtian religion has ſo flouriſhed and increaſed continually, that it is now preached

* Clem. Al. Strom. lib. vi. ad fin.

† Or. in Celſ. lib. i.

freely

freely without moleſtation, although there were a thouſand obſtacles to the ſpreading of the doctrine of Jeſus in the world. But as it was the will of God that the Gentiles ſhould have the benefit of it, all the councils of men againſt the Chriſtians were defeated; and by how much the more emperors and governors of provinces, and the people everywhere, ſtrove to depreſs them, ſo much the more have they increaſed and prevailed exceedingly *."

It is well known, that within leſs than eighty years after this, the Roman empire became Chriſtian under Conſtantine; and it is probable that Conſtantine declared himſelf on the ſide of the Chriſtians, becauſe they were the powerful party: for Arnobius, who wrote immediately before Conſtantine's acceſſion, ſpeaks of the whole world as filled with Chriſt's doctrine, of its diffuſion throughout all countries, of an innumerable body of Chriſtians in diſtant provinces, of

* Or. con. Celſ. lib. vii.

the

the ſtrange revolution of opinion of men of the greateſt genius, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, phyſicians, having come over to the inſtitution, and that alſo in the face of threats, executions, and tortures *." And not more than twenty years after Conſtantine's entire poſſeſſion of the empire, Julius Firmicus Maternus calls upon the emperors Conſtantius and Conſtans to extirpate the relics of the ancient religion; the reduced and fallen condition of which is deſcribed by our author in the following words:—"Licet adhuc in quibuſdam regionibus idololatriæ morientia palpitent membra, tamen in eo res eſt, ut a Chriſtianis omnibus terris peſtiferum hoc malum funditus amputetur;" and in another place, "Modicum tantum ſupereſt, ut legibus veſtris—extincta idololatriæ pereat funeſta contagio †." It will not be thought that we quote this

* Arnob. in Gentes, l. i. p. 27. 9. 24. 42. 44. edit. Lug. Bat. 1650.

† De Error. Profan. Relig. c. xxi. p. 172. quoted by Lardner, vol. viii. p. 262.

writer in order to recommend his temper or his judgement, but to ſhew the comparative ſtate of Chriſtianity and of Heatheniſm at this period. Fifty years afterwards, Jerome repreſents the decline of Paganiſm in language which conveys the ſame idea of its approaching extinction: "Solitudinem patitur et in urbe gentilitas. Dii quondam nationum, cum bubonibus et noctuis, in ſolis culminibus remanſerunt*." Jerome here indulges a triumph, natural and allowable in a zealous friend of the cauſe, but which could only be ſuggeſted to his mind by the conſent and univerſality with which he ſaw the religion received. "But now (ſays he) the paſſion and reſurrection of Chriſt are celebrated in the diſcourſes and writings of all nations. I need not mention Jews, Greeks, and Latins. The Indians, Perſians, Goths and Egyptians, philoſophiſe, and firmly believe the immortality of the ſoul, and future recompenſes, which, before, the greateſt philoſophers had denied, or doubted

* Jer. ad Lect. ep. 57.

of, or perplexed with their diſputes. The fierceneſs of Thracians and Scythians is now ſoftened by the gentle ſound of the goſpel; and every where Chriſt is all in all *." Were therefore the motives of Conſtantine's converſion ever ſo problematical, the eaſy eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, and the ruin of Heatheniſm under him and his immediate ſucceſſors, is of itſelf a proof of the progreſs which Chriſtianity had made in the preceding period. It may be added alſo, "that Maxentius, the rival of Conſtantine, had ſhewn himſelf friendly to the Chriſtians. Therefore, of thoſe who were contending for worldly power and empire, one actually favoured and flattered them, and another may be ſuſpected to have joined himſelf to them, partly from conſideration of intereſt: ſo conſiderable were they become, under external diſadvantages of all ſorts †." This at leaſt is certain, that, throughout the whole tranſaction hitherto, the great

* Jer. ep. 8. ad Heliod.

† Lardner, vol. vii. p. 380.

ſeemed

ſeemed to follow, not to lead, the public opinion.

It may help to convey to us ſome notion of the extent and progreſs of Chriſtianity, or rather of the character and quality of many early Chriſtians, of their learning and their labours, to notice the number of Chriſtian *writers* who flouriſhed in theſe ages. St. Jerome's catalogue contains *ſixty-ſix* writers within the three firſt centuries, and the ſix firſt years of the fourth; and *fifty-four* between that time and his own, viz. A. D. 392. Jerome introduces his catalogue with the following juſt remonſtrance:—"Let thoſe who ſay the church has had no philoſophers, nor eloquent and learned men, obſerve who and what they were who founded, eſtabliſhed, and adorned it; let them ceaſe to accuſe our faith of ruſticity, and confeſs their miſtake*." Of theſe writers, ſeveral, as Juſtin, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Bardeſanes,

* Jer. Prol. in Lib. de Ser. Ecc.

Hippolitus, Euſebius, were voluminous writers. Chriſtian writers abounded particularly about the year 178. Alexander, biſhop of Jeruſalem, founded a library in that city A. D. 212. Pamphilus, the friend of Origen, founded a library at Ceſarea A. D. 294. Public defences were alſo ſet forth, by various advocates of the religion, in the courſe of its three firſt centuries. Within one hundred years after Chriſt's aſcenſion, Quadratus and Ariſtides, whoſe works, except ſome few fragments of the firſt, are loſt; and, about twenty years afterwards, Juſtin Martyr, whoſe works remain, preſented apologies for the Chriſtian religion to the Roman emperors; Quadratus and Ariſtides to Adrian, Juſtin to Antoninus Pius, and a ſecond to Marcus Antoninus. Melito biſhop of Sardis, and Apollinaris biſhop of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, men of great reputation, did the ſame to Marcus Antoninus twenty years afterwards*: and ten years after this,

* Euſeb. Hiſt. lib. iv. c. 26. See alſo Lardner, vol. ii. p. 666.

Apollonius,

Apollonius, who ſuffered martyrdom under the emperor Commodus, compoſed an apology for his faith, which he read in the ſenate, and which was afterwards publiſhed *. Fourteen years after the apology of Apollonius, Tertullian addreſſed the work which now remains under that name, to the governors of provinces in the Roman empire; and, about the ſame time, Minucius Felix compoſed a defence of the Chriſtian religion, which is ſtill extant; and, ſhortly after the concluſion of this century, copious defences of Chriſtianity were publiſhed by Arnobius and Lactantius.

* Lard. vol. ii. p. 687.

SECTION II.

Reflections upon the preceding Account.

IN viewing the progreſs of Chriſtianity, our firſt attention is due to the number of converts at Jeruſalem, immediately after its founder's death; becauſe this ſucceſs was a ſucceſs at the *time*, and upon the *ſpot*, when and where the chief part of the hiſtory had been tranſacted.

We are, in the next place, called upon to attend to the early eſtabliſhment of numerous Chriſtian ſocieties in Judea and Galilee, which countries had been the ſcene of Chriſt's miracles and miniſtry, and where the memory of what had paſſed, and the knowledge of what was alledged, muſt have yet been freſh and certain.

We are, thirdly, invited to recollect the ſucceſs

ſucceſs of the apoſtles and of their companions, at the ſeveral places to which they came, both within and without Judea; becauſe it was the credit given to original witneſſes, appealing for the truth of their accounts to what themſelves had ſeen and heard. The effect alſo of their preaching ſtrongly confirms the truth of what our hiſtory poſitively and circumſtantially relates, that they were able to exhibit to their hearers ſupernatural atteſtations of their miſſion.

We are, laſtly, to conſider the *ſubſequent* growth and ſpread of the religion, of which we receive ſucceſſive intimations, and ſatisfactory, though general and occaſional, accounts until its full and final eſtabliſhment.

In all theſe ſeveral ſtages, the hiſtory is without a parallel; for it muſt be obſerved, that we have not now been tracing the progreſs, and deſcribing the prevalency, of an opinion, founded upon philoſophical or critical arguments, upon mere deductions of

reaſon, or the conſtruction of ancient writings (of which kind are the ſeveral theories which have, at different times, gained poſſeſſion of the public mind in various departments of ſcience and literature; and of one or other of which kind are the tenets alſo which divide the various ſects of Chriſtianity): but that we ſpeak of a ſyſtem, the very baſis and poſtulatum of which was a ſupernatural character aſcribed to a particular perſon; of a doctrine, the truth whereof depended entirely upon the truth of a matter of fact then recent. "To eſtabliſh a new religion, even amongſt a few people, or in one ſingle nation, is a thing in itſelf exceedingly difficult. To reform ſome corruptions which may have ſpread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps ſo hard, when the main and principal part of that religion is preſerved entire and unſhaken; and yet this very often cannot be accompliſhed, without an extraordinary concurrence of circumſtances, and may be attempted a thouſand times without ſucceſs. But to introduce a new faith,

faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to perſuade many nations to quit the religion in which their anceſtors had lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial, to make them forſake and deſpiſe the deities which they had been accuſtomed to reverence and worſhip; this is a work of ſtill greater difficulty*. The reſiſtance of education, worldly policy, and ſuperſtition, is almoſt invincible."

If men, in theſe days, be Chriſtians in conſequence of their education, in ſubmiſſion to authority, or in compliance with faſhion, let us recollect that the very contrary of this, at the beginning, was the caſe. The firſt race of Chriſtians, as well as millions who ſucceeded them, became ſuch in formal oppoſition to all theſe motives; to the whole power and ſtrength of this influence. Every argument therefore, and every inſtance, which ſets forth the preju-

* Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſt. Rel. p. 107, ed. iv.

dice

dice of education, and the almoſt irreſiſtible effects of that prejudice (and no perſons are more fond of expatiating upon this ſubject than deiſtical writers), in fact confirms the evidence of Chriſtianity.

But, in order to judge of the argument which is drawn from the early propagation of Chriſtianity, I know no fairer way of proceeding, than to compare what we have ſeen of the ſubject, with the ſucceſs of Chriſtian miſſions in modern ages. In the Eaſt-India miſſion, ſupported by the Society for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge, we hear ſometimes of thirty, ſometimes of forty, being baptiſed in the courſe of a year, and theſe principally children. Of converts properly ſo called, that is, of adults voluntarily embracing Chriſtianity, the number is extremely ſmall. "Notwithſtanding the labour of miſſionaries for upwards of two hundred years, and the eſtabliſhments of different Chriſtian nations who ſupport them, there are not twelve thouſand Indian

dian Chriſtians, and thoſe almoſt entirely outcaſts *.

I lament, as much as any man, the little progreſs which Chriſtianity has made in theſe countries, and the inconſiderable effect that has followed the labours of its miſſionaries; but I ſee in it a ſtrong proof of the divine origin of the religion. What had the apoſtles to aſſiſt them in propagating Chriſtianity, which the miſſionaries have not? If piety and zeal had been ſufficient, I doubt not but that our miſſionaries poſſeſs theſe qualities in a high degree; for nothing except piety and zeal could engage them in the undertaking. If ſanctity of life and manners was the allurement, the conduct of theſe men is unblamable. If the advantage of education and learning be looked to, there is not one of the modern miſſionaries, who is not, in this reſpect, ſuperior to all the apoſtles; and that not only abſolutely, but, what

* Sketches relating to the hiſtory, learning, and manners of the Hindoos, p. 48, quoted by Dr. Robertſon, Hiſt. Dif. concerning ancient India, p. 236.

is

is of more importance, *relatively*, in compariſon, that is, with thoſe amongſt whom they exerciſe their office. If the intrinſic excellency of the religion, the perfection of its morality, the purity of its precepts, the eloquence or tenderneſs or ſublimity of various parts of its writings, were the recommendations by which it made its way, theſe remain the ſame. If the character and circumſtances, under which the preachers were introduced to the countries in which they taught, be accounted of importance, this advantage is all on the ſide of the modern miſſionaries. They come from a country and a people, to which the Indian world look up with ſentiments of deference. The apoſtles came forth amongſt the Gentiles under no other name than that of Jews, which was preciſely the character they deſpiſed and derided. If it be diſgraceful in India to become a Chriſtian, it could not be much leſs ſo to be enrolled amongſt thoſe, "quos per flagitia inviſos, vulgus Chriſtianos appellabat." If the religion which they had to encounter be conſidered, the difference, I apprehend,

apprehend, will not be great. The theology of both was nearly the ſame: "what is ſuppoſed to be performed by the power of Jupiter, of Neptune, of Æolus, of Mars, of Venus, according to the mythology of the Weſt, is aſcribed, in the Eaſt, to the agency of Agrio the god of fire, Varoon the god of oceans, Vayoo the god of wind, Cama the god of love*." The ſacred rites of the Weſtern Polytheiſm were gay, feſtive, and licentious; the rites of the public religion in the Eaſt partake of the ſame character, with a more avowed indecency. "In every function performed in the pagodas, as well as in every public proceſſion, it is the office of theſe women (*i. e.* of women prepared by the Brahmins for the purpoſe) to dance before the idol, and to ſing hymns in his praiſe; and it is difficult to ſay whether they treſpaſs moſt againſt decency by the geſtures they exhibit, or by the verſes which they recite. The walls of the pa-

* Baghvat Geeta, p. 94, quoted by Dr. Robertſon, Ind. Diſ. p. 306.

godas

godas were covered with paintings in a ſtyle no leſs indelicate * †."

On both ſides of the compariſon the popular religion had a ſtrong eſtabliſhment. In ancient Greece and Rome it was ſtrictly incorporated with the ſtate. The magiſtrate was the prieſt. The higheſt officers of government bore the moſt diſtinguiſhed part in the celebration of the public rites. In India, a powerful and numerous caſt poſſeſs excluſively the adminiſtration of the eſtabliſhed worſhip; and are, of conſequence, devoted to its ſervice, and attached to its intereſt. In both, the prevailing mythology was deſtitute of any proper evidence; or rather, in both, the origin of the tradition is run up into ages long anterior to the exiſt-

* Others of the deities of the Eaſt are of an auſtere and gloomy character, to be propitiated by victims, ſometimes by human ſacrifices, and by voluntary torments of the moſt excruciating kind.

† Voyage de Gentil. vol. i. p. 244—260. Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 57, quoted by Dr. Robertſon, p. 320.

ence of credible hiſtory, or of written language. The Indian chronology computes æras by millions of years, and the life of man by thouſands *; and in theſe, or prior to theſe, is placed the hiſtory of their divinities. In both, the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition held the ſame place in the public opinion; that is to ſay, in both it was credited by the bulk of the people †, but by the learned and philoſophic

* "The Suffec Jogue, or age of purity, is ſaid to have laſted three million two hundred thouſand years, and they hold that the life of man was extended in that age to one hundred thouſand years; but there is a difference amongſt the Indian writers of ſix millions of years in the computation of this æra." Ib.

† "How abſurd ſoever the articles of faith may be which ſuperſtition has adopted, or how unhallowed the rites which it preſcribes, the former are received, in every age and country, with unheſitating aſſent, by the great body of the people, and the latter obſerved with ſcrupulous exactneſs. In our reaſonings concerning opinions and practices which differ widely from our own, we are extremely apt to err. Having been inſtructed ourſelves in the principles of a religion worthy in every reſpect of that divine wiſdom by which they were dictated, we frequently expreſs wonder at the credulity of nations, in embracing ſyſtems of belief which appear

philoſophic part of the community, either derided, or regarded by them as only fit to be upholden for the ſake of its political uſes*.

Or if it ſhould be allowed, that the ancient heathens believed in their religion leſs

appear to us ſo directly repugnant to right reaſon; and ſometimes ſuſpect, that tenets ſo wild and extravagant do not really gain credit with them. But experience may ſatisfy us, that neither our wonder nor ſuſpicions are well founded. No article of the public religion was called in queſtion by thoſe people of ancient Europe with whoſe hiſtory we are beſt acquainted; and no practice, which it enjoined, appeared improper to them. On the other hand, every opinion that tended to diminiſh the reverence of men for the gods of their country, or to alienate them from their worſhip, excited, among the Greeks and Romans, that indignant zeal which is natural to every people attached to their religion by a firm perſuaſion of its truth." Ind. Dif. p. 321.

* That the learned Brahmins of the Eaſt are rational theiſts, and ſecretly reject the eſtabliſhed theory, and contemn the rites that were founded upon them, or rather conſider them as contrivances to be ſupported for their political uſes, ſee Dr. Robertſon's Ind. Dif. p. 324—334.

generally than the preſent Indians do, I am far from thinking that this circumſtance would afford any facility to the work of the apoſtles, above that of the modern miſſionaries. To me it appears, and I think it material to be remarked, that a diſbelief of the eſtabliſhed religion of their country has no tendency to diſpoſe men for the reception of another; but that, on the contrary, it generates a ſettled contempt of all religious pretenſions whatever. General infidelity is the hardeſt ſoil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon. Could a Methodiſt or Moravian promiſe himſelf a better chance of ſucceſs with a French eſprit fort, who had been accuſtomed to laugh at the Popery of his country, than with a believing Mahometan or Hindoo? Or are our modern unbelievers in Chriſtianity, for that reaſon, in danger of becoming Mahometans or Hindoos? It does not appear that the Jews, who had a body of hiſtorical evidence to offer for their religion, and who at that time undoubtedly entertained and held forth the expectation of a future ſtate,

derived any great advantage, as to the extenſion of their ſyſtem, from the diſcredit into which the popular religion had fallen with many of their heathen neighbours.

We have particularly directed our obſervations to the ſtate and progreſs of Chriſtianity amongſt the inhabitants of *India*; but the hiſtory of the Chriſtian miſſion in other countries, where the efficacy of the miſſion is left ſolely to the conviction wrought by the preaching of ſtrangers, preſents the ſame idea, as the Indian miſſion does, of the feebleneſs and inadequacy of human means. About twenty-five years ago, was publiſhed in England, a tranſlation from the Dutch of a hiſtory of Greenland, and a relation of the miſſion, for above thirty years carried on in that country by the Unitas Fratrum, or Moravians. Every part of that relation confirms the opinion we have ſtated. Nothing could ſurpaſs, or hardly equal, the zeal and patience of the miſſionaries. Yet their hiſtorian, in the concluſion of his narrative, could find place for no reflections more

more encouraging than the following:—"A perſon that had known the heathen, that had ſeen the little benefit from the great pains hitherto taken with them, and conſidered that one after another had abandoned all hopes of the converſion of thoſe infidels (and ſome thought they would never be converted, till they ſaw miracles wrought as in the apoſtles' days, and this the Greenlanders expected and demanded of their inſtructors): one that conſidered this, I ſay, would not ſo much wonder at the paſt unfruitfulneſs of theſe young beginners, as at their ſteadfaſt perſeverance in the midſt of nothing but diſtreſs, difficulties and impediments, internally and externally; and that they never deſponded of the converſion of thoſe poor creatures amidſt all ſeeming impoſſibilities*."

From the widely diſproportionate effects, which attend the preaching of modern miſſionaries of Chriſtianity, compared with what followed the miniſtry of Chriſt and

* Hiſt. of Greenland, vol. ii. p. 376.

his apoſtles, under circumſtances either alike, or not ſo unlike as to account for the difference, a concluſion is fairly drawn, in ſupport of what our hiſtories deliver concerning them, viz. that they poſſeſſed means of conviction, which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to, which we want.

SEC-

SECTION III.

Of the Religion of Mahomet.

THE only event in the hiſtory of the human ſpecies, which admits of compariſon with the propagation of Chriſtianity, is the ſucceſs of Mahometaniſm. The Mahometan inſtitution was rapid in its progreſs, was recent in its hiſtory, and was founded upon a ſupernatural or prophetic character aſſumed by its author. In theſe articles the reſemblance with Chriſtianity is confeſſed. But there are points of difference, which ſeparate, we apprehend, the two caſes entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretenſions upon miracles, properly ſo called; that is, upon proofs of ſupernatural agency, capable of being known and atteſted by others. Chriſtians are warranted in this aſſertion by the evidence of the Koran, in which Ma-

homet not only does not affect the power of working miracles, but expreſsly diſclaims it. The following paſſages of that book furniſh direct proofs of the truth of what we alledge:—"The infidels ſay, Unleſs a ſign be ſent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; thou art a preacher only*." Again, "Nothing hindered us from ſending *thee* with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with impoſture†." And laſtly, "They ſay, Unleſs a ſign be ſent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; anſwer, Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not ſufficient for them, that we have ſent down unto them the book of the Koran to be read unto them‡?" Beſide theſe acknowledgements, I have obſerved *thirteen* diſtinct places, in which Mahomet puts the objection (unleſs a ſign, &c.) into the mouth of the unbeliever, in not one of which does he alledge

* Sale's Koran, c. xiii. p. 201, ed. quarto.
† c. xvii. p. 232. ‡ c. xxix. p. 328.

a miracle

a miracle in reply. His anſwer is, " that God giveth the power of working miracles, when and to whom he pleaſeth * ;" " that if he ſhould work miracles, they would not believe † ;" " that they had before rejected Moſes, and Jeſus, and the Prophets, who wrought miracles ‡ ;" " that the Koran itſelf was a miracle §."

The only place in the Koran in which it can be pretended that a ſenſible miracle is referred to (for I do not allow the ſecret viſitations of Gabriel, the night journey of Mahomet to heaven, or the preſence in battle of inviſible hoſts of angels, to deſerve the name of *ſenſible* miracles) is the beginning of the fifty-fourth chapter. The words are theſe—" The hour of judgement approacheth, *and the moon hath been ſplit in ſunder* ; but if the unbelievers ſee a ſign, they turn aſide, ſaying, " This is a powerful charm." The Mahometan expoſitors diſagree in their

* Sale's Koran, c. v. x. xiii. twice. † c. vi.
‡ c. iii. xxi. xxviii. § c. xvi.

interpretation of this paſſage; ſome explaining it to be a mention of the ſplitting of the moon, as one of the future ſigns of the approach of the day of judgement; others referring it to a miraculous appearance which had then taken place*. It ſeems to me not improbable, that Mahomet may have taken advantage of ſome extraordinary halo, or other unuſual appearance of the moon, which had happened about this time; and which ſupplied a foundation both for this paſſage, and for the ſtory which in after times had been raiſed out of it.

After this more than ſilence; after theſe authentic *confeſſions* of the Koran, we are not to be moved with miraculous ſtories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote his life about ſix hundred years after his death; or which are found in the legend of Al Jannabi, who came two hundred years later†.

On

* Vide Sale in loc.

† It does not, I think, appear, that theſe hiſtorians had any written accounts to appeal to more ancient than the Sonnah, which was a collection of traditions made

On the contrary, from comparing what Mahomet himſelf wrote and ſaid, with what was afterwards reported of him by his followers, the plain and fair concluſion is, that, when the religion was eſtabliſhed by conqueſt, then, and not till then, came out the ſtories of his miracles.

Now this difference alone conſtitutes, in my opinion, a bar to all reaſoning from one caſe to the other. The ſucceſs of a religion founded upon a miraculous hiſtory, ſhews the credit which was given to the hiſtory; and this credit, under the circumſtances in which it was given, *i. e.* by perſons capable of knowing the truth, and intereſted to enquire after it, is evidence of the reality of the hiſtory, and, by conſequence, of the truth of the religion. Where a miraculous hiſtory is not alledged, no part of this argu-

made by order of the Caliphs two hundred years after Mahomet's death. Mahomet died A. D. 632; Al-Bochari, one of the ſix doctors who compiled the Sonnah, was born A. D. 809, died 869. Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, p. 192, ed. 7th.

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ment can be applied. We admit that multitudes acknowledged the pretenſions of Mahomet; but theſe pretenſions being deſtitute of miraculous evidence, we know that the grounds upon which they were acknowledged, could not be ſecure grounds of perſuaſion to his followers, nor their example any authority to us. Admit the whole of Mahomet's authentic hiſtory, ſo far as it was of a nature capable of being known or witneſſed by others, to be true (which is certainly to admit all that the reception of the religion can be brought to prove), and Mahomet might ſtill be an impoſtor, or enthuſiaſt, or an union of both. Admit to be true almoſt any part of Chriſt's hiſtory, of that, I mean, which was public, and within the cogniſance of his followers, and he muſt have come from God. Where matter of fact is not in queſtion, where miracles are not alledged, I do not ſee that the progreſs of a religion is a better argument of its truth, than the prevalency of any ſyſtem of opinions in natural religion, morality, or phyſics, is a proof of the truth of thoſe opinions.

nions. And we know that this ſort of argument is inadmiſſible in any branch of philoſophy whatever.

But it will be ſaid, If one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another? To which I reply, firſt, that this is not the queſtion: the proper queſtion is not, whether a religious inſtitution could be ſet up without miracles, but whether a religion, or a change of religion, founding itſelf in miracles, could ſucceed without any reality to reſt upon? I apprehend theſe two caſes to be very different; and I apprehend Mahomet's not taking this courſe to be one proof, amongſt others, that the thing is difficult, if not impoſſible, to be accompliſhed: certainly it was not from an unconſciouſneſs of the value and importance of miraculous evidence; for it is very obſervable, that in the ſame volume, and ſometimes in the ſame chapters, in which Mahomet ſo repeatedly diſclaims the power of working miracles himſelf, he is inceſſantly referring to the miracles of preceding prophets. One would

would imagine, to hear ſome men talk, or to read ſome books, that the ſetting up of a religion by dint of miraculous pretences was a thing of every day's experience; whereas I believe, that, except the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religion, there is no tolerably well authenticated account of any ſuch thing having been accompliſhed.

II. Secondly, the eſtabliſhment of Mahomet's religion was effected by cauſes which in no degree appertained to the origin of Chriſtianity.

During the firſt twelve years of his miſſion, Mahomet had recourſe only to perſuaſion. This is allowed. And there is ſufficient reaſon from the effect to believe, that if he had confined himſelf to this mode of propagating his religion, we of the preſent day ſhould never have heard either of him or it. "Three years were ſilently employed in the converſion of *fourteen* proſelytes. For ten years the religion advanced with a ſlow and painful progreſs within the walls of

of Mecca. The number of proſelytes in the ſeventh year of his miſſion may be eſtimated by the abſence of *eighty-three* men and eighteen women, who retired to Æthiopia*." Yet this progreſs, ſuch as it was, appears to have been aided by ſome very important advantages which Mahomet found in his ſituation, in his mode of conducting his deſign, and in his doctrine.

1. Mahomet was the grandſon of the moſt powerful and honourable family in Mecca; and although the early death of his father had not left him a patrimony ſuitable to his birth, he had, long before the commencement of his miſſion, repaired this deficiency by an opulent marriage. A perſon conſiderable by his wealth, of high deſcent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himſelf the character of a religious teacher, would not fail of attracting attention and followers.

* Gibbon's Hiſt. vol. ix. p. 244 et ſeq. ed. Dub.

2. Ma-

2. Mahomet conducted his deſign, in the outſet eſpecially, with great art and prudence. He conducted it as a politician would conduct a plot. His firſt application was to his own family. This gained him his wife's uncle, a conſiderable perſon in Mecca, together with his couſin Ali, afterwards the celebrated Caliph, then a youth of great expectation, and even already diſtinguiſhed by his attachment, impetuoſity and courage *. He next addreſſed himſelf to Abu Becr, a man amongſt the firſt of the Koreiſh in wealth and influence. The intereſt and example of Abu Becr drew in five other principal perſons in Mecca, whoſe ſolicitations prevailed upon five more of the

* Of which Mr. Gibbon has preſerved the following ſpecimen:—"When Mahomet called out in an aſſembly of his family, Who among you will be my companion, and my vizir? Ali, then only in the fourteenth year of his age, ſuddenly replied, O prophet, I am the man; whoſoever riſes againſt thee, I will daſh out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet, I will be thy vizir over them." Vol. ix. p. 245.

ſame

ſame rank. This was the work of three years; during which time every thing was tranſacted in ſecret. Upon the ſtrength of theſe allies, and under the powerful protection of his family, who, however ſome of them might diſapprove his enterpriſe, or deride his pretenſions, would not ſuffer the orphan of their houſe, the relict of their favourite brother, to be inſulted, Mahomet now commenced his public preaching. And the advance which he made, during the nine or ten remaining years of his peaceable miniſtry, was by no means greater than what, with theſe advantages, and with the additional and ſingular circumſtance of there being no *eſtabliſhed* religion at Mecca at that time to contend with, might reaſonably have been expected. How ſoon his primitive adherents were let into the ſecret of his views of empire, or in what ſtage of his undertaking theſe views firſt opened themſelves to his own mind, it is not now eaſy to determine. The event however was, that theſe his firſt proſelytes all ultimately attained to

riches and honours, to the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms*.

3. The Arabs deduced their deſcent from Abraham through the line of Iſhmael. The inhabitants of Mecca, in common probably with the other Arabian tribes, acknowledged, as, I think, may clearly be collected from the Koran, one ſupreme deity, but had aſſociated with him many objects of idolatrous worſhip. The great doctrine, with which Mahomet ſet out, was the ſtrict and excluſive unity of God. Abraham, he told them, their illuſtrious anceſtor; Iſhmael, the father of their nation; Moſes, the law-giver of the Jews; and Jeſus, the author of Chriſtianity, had all aſſerted the ſame thing; that their followers had univerſally corrupted the truth, and that *he* was now commiſſioned to reſtore it to the world. Was it to be wondered at, that a doctrine ſo ſpecious, and authoriſed by names, ſome or other of which were holden in the higheſt

* Gib. vol. ix. p. 244.

veneration

veneration by every deſcription of his hearers, ſhould, in the hands of a popular miſſionary, prevail to the extent in which Mahomet ſucceeded by his pacific miniſtry.

4. Of the inſtitution which Mahomet joined with this fundamental doctrine, and of the Koran in which that inſtitution is delivered, we diſcover, I think, two purpoſes that pervade the whole, viz. to make converts, and to make his converts ſoldiers. The following particulars, amongſt others, may be conſidered as pretty evident indications of theſe deſigns:

1. When Mahomet began to preach, his addreſs to the Jews, the Chriſtians, and to the Pagan Arabs, was, that the religion which he taught, was no other than what had been originally their own. "We believe in God, and that which hath been ſent down unto us, and that which hath been ſent down unto Abraham, and Iſmael and Iſaac, and Jacob and the Tribes, and that which was delivered unto Moſes and Jeſus,

and that which was delivered unto the Prophets from their Lord; we make no diſtinction between any of them *." "He hath ordained you the religion which he commanded Noah, and which we have revealed unto thee, O Mohammed, and which we commanded Abraham and Moſes and Jeſus, ſaying, Obſerve this religion, and be not divided therein †." "He hath choſen you, and hath not impoſed on you any difficulty in the religion which he hath given you, the religion of your father Abraham ‡."

2. The author of the Koran never ceaſes from deſcribing the future anguiſh of unbelievers, their deſpair, regret, penitence, and torment. It is the point which he labours above all others. And theſe deſcriptions are conceived in terms which will appear in no ſmall degree impreſſive, even to the modern reader of an Engliſh tranſlation.

* Sale's Koran, c. ii. p. 17. † Ib. c. xlii. p. 393.
‡ Ib. c. xxii. p. 281.

Doubtleſs they would operate with much greater force upon the minds of thoſe to whom they were immediately directed. The terror which they ſeem well calculated to inſpire, would be to many tempers a powerful application.

3. On the other hand, his voluptuous paradiſe; his robes of ſilk, his palaces of marble, his rivers and ſhades, his groves and couches, his wines, his dainties; and, above all, his ſeventy-two virgins aſſigned to each of the faithful, of reſplendent beauty and eternal youth; intoxicated the imaginations, and ſeized the paſſions, of his Eaſtern followers.

4. But Mahomet's higheſt heaven was reſerved for thoſe who fought his battles, or expended their fortunes in his cauſe. "Thoſe believers who ſit ſtill at home, not having any hurt, and thoſe who employ their fortunes and their perſons for the religion of God, ſhall not be held equal. God hath preferred thoſe who employ their for-

tunes and their perſons in that cauſe, to a degree above thoſe who ſit at home. God hath indeed promiſed every one Paradiſe, but God hath preferred thoſe who *fight for the faith*, before thoſe who ſit ſtill, by adding unto them a great reward; by degrees of honour conferred upon them from him, and by granting them forgiveneſs and mercy *." Again, " Do ye reckon the giving drink to the pilgrims, and the viſiting of the holy temple, to be actions as meritorious as thoſe performed by him who believeth in God and the laſt day, and *fighteth for the religion of God?* They ſhall not be held equal with God.—They who have believed, and fled their country, and employed their ſubſtance and their perſons in the defence of God's true religion, ſhall be in the higheſt degree of honour with God; and theſe are they who ſhall be happy. The Lord ſendeth them good tidings of mercy from him, and good will, and of gardens wherein they ſhall enjoy laſting pleaſures. They ſhall

* Ib. c. iv. p. 73.

continue

continue therein for ever, for with God is a great reward*." And, once more, "Verily God hath purchaſed of the true believers their ſouls and their ſubſtance, promiſing them the enjoyment of Paradiſe, on condition that they *fight for the cauſe of God*: whether they ſlay or be ſlain, the promiſe for the ſame is aſſuredly due by the Law and the Goſpel and the Koran † ‡."

5. His doctrine of predeſtination was applicable, and was applied by him, to the ſame purpoſe of fortifying and of exalting the courage of his adherents. "If any thing of the matter had happened unto us,

* Ib. c. ix. p. 151.

† Ib. p. 164.

‡ "The ſword (ſaith Mahomet) is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood ſhed in the cauſe of God, a night ſpent in arms, is of more avail than two months of faſting or prayer. Whoſoever falls in battle, his ſins are forgiven at the day of judgement; his wounds ſhall be reſplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as muſk, and the loſs of his limbs ſhall be ſupplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." Gibb. vol. ix. p. 256.

we had not been ſlain here. Anſwer, If ye had been in your houſes, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whoſe ſlaughter was decreed, to the places where they died *."

6. In warm regions, the appetite of the ſexes is ardent, the paſſion for inebriating liquors moderate. In compliance with this diſtinction, although Mahomet laid a reſtraint upon the drinking of wine, in the uſe of women he allowed an almoſt unbounded indulgence. Four wives, with the liberty of changing them at pleaſure †, together with the perſons of all his captives ‡, was an irreſiſtible bribe to an Arabian warrior. "God is minded," ſays he, ſpeaking of this very ſubject, "to make his religion light unto you, for man was created weak." How different this from the unaccommodating purity of the goſpel! How would Mahomet have ſucceeded with the Chriſ-

* Ch. iii. p. 54. ‡ Ch. iv. p. 63.

‡ Gibb. p. 255.

tian

tian leſſon in his mouth, "Whoſoever looketh after a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart?" It muſt be added, that Mahomet did not venture upon the prohibition of wine, till the fourth year of the Hegira, or the ſeventeenth of his miſſion *, when his military ſucceſſes had completely eſtabliſhed his authority. The ſame obſervation holds of the faſt of the Ramadan †, and of the moſt laborious part of his inſtitution, the pilgrimage to Mecca ‡.

What has hitherto been collected from the records of the Muſſulman hiſtory, relates to the twelve or thirteen years of Mahomet's peaceable preaching, which part alone of his life and enterpriſe admits of the ſmalleſt compariſon with the origin of

* Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. i. p. 126. † Ib. p. 112.

‡ This latter, however, already prevailed amongſt the Arabs, and had grown out of their exceſſive veneration for the Caaba. Mahomet's law, in this reſpect, was rather a compliance than an innovation §.

§ Sale's Prelim. Diſc. p. 122.

Chriſtianity. A new ſcene is now unfolded. The city of Medina, diſtant about ten days journey from Mecca, was at that time diſtracted by the hereditary contentions of two hoſtile tribes. Theſe feuds were exaſperated by the mutual perſecutions of the Jews and Chriſtians, and of the different Chriſtian ſects by which the city was inhabited *, The religion of Mahomet preſented, in ſome meaſure, a point of union or compromiſe to theſe divided opinions. It embraced the principles which were common to them all. Each party ſaw in it an honourable acknowledgement of the fundamental truth of their own ſyſtem. To the Pagan Arab, ſomewhat imbued with the ſentiments and knowledge of his Jewiſh or Chriſtian fellow citizen, it offered no offenſive, or very improbable theology. This recommendation procured to Mahometaniſm a more favourable reception at Medina, than its author had been able, by twelve years painful endeavours, to obtain for it at Mecca. Yet,

* Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. 1. p. 100.

after

after all, the progreſs of the religion was inconſiderable. His miſſionary could only collect a congregation of forty perſons *. It was not a religious, but a political aſſociation which ultimately introduced Mahomet into Medina. Haraſſed, as it ſhould ſeem, and diſguſted by the long continuance of factions and diſputes, the inhabitants of that city ſaw in the admiſſion of the Prophet's authority a reſt from the miſeries which they had ſuffered, and a ſuppreſſion of the violence and fury which they had learned to condemn. After an embaſſy therefore, compoſed of believers and unbelievers †, and of perſons of both tribes, with whom a treaty was concluded of ſtrict alliance and ſupport, Mahomet made his public entry, and was received as the Sovereign of Medina.

From this time, or ſoon after this time, the impoſtor changed his language and his conduct. Having now a town at his com-

* Ib. p. 85. † Ib. p. 85.

mand,

mand, where to arm his party, and to head them with ſecurity, he enters upon new councils. He now pretends that a divine commiſſion is given to him to attack the infidels, to deſtroy idolatry, and to ſet up the true faith by the ſword *. An early victory over a very ſuperior force, achieved by conduct and bravery, eſtabliſhed the renown of his arms, and of his perſonal character †. Every year after this was marked by battles or aſſaſſinations. The nature and activity of Mahomet's future exertions may be eſtimated from the computation, that, in the nine following years of his life, he commanded his army in perſon in eight general engagements ‡, and undertook, by himſelf or his lieutenants, fifty military enterpriſes.

From this time we have nothing left to account for, but that Mahomet ſhould collect an army, that his army ſhould conquer, and that his religion ſhould proceed together

* Ib. p. 88. † Victory of Bedr, ib. p. 106.
‡ Un. Hiſt, vol. 1. p. 255.

with

with his conqueſts. The ordinary experience of human affairs leaves us little to wonder at, in any of theſe effects: and they were likewiſe each aſſiſted by peculiar facilities. From all ſides, the roving Arabs crowded round the ſtandard of religion and plunder, of freedom and victory, of arms and rapine. Beſide the highly painted joys of a carnal paradiſe, Mahomet rewarded his followers in this world with a liberal diviſion of the ſpoils, and with the perſons of their female captives*. The condition of Arabia, occupied by ſmall independent tribes, expoſed it to the impreſſion, and yielded to the progreſs of a firm and reſolute army. After the reduction of his native peninſula, the weakneſs alſo of the Roman provinces on the North and the Weſt, as well as the diſtracted ſtate of the Perſian empire on the Eaſt, facilitated the ſucceſsful invaſion of neighbouring countries. That Mahomet's conqueſts ſhould carry his religion along with them, will excite little ſur-

* Gibb. vol. ix. p. 255.

priſe,

priſe, when we know the conditions which he propoſed to the vanquiſhed. Death or converſion was the only choice offered to idolaters. "Strike off their heads; ſtrike off all the ends of their fingers *: kill the idolaters, whereſoever ye ſhall find them †." To the Jews and Chriſtians was left the ſomewhat milder alternative, of ſubjection and tribute, if they perſiſted in their own religion, or of an equal participation in the rights and liberties, the honours and privileges, of the faithful, if they embraced the religion of their conquerors. "Ye Chriſtian dogs, you know your option; the Koran, the tribute, or the ſword ‡." The corrupt ſtate of Chriſtianity in the ſeventh century, and the contentions of its ſects, unhappily ſo fell in with men's care of their ſafety, or their fortunes, as to induce many to forſake its profeſſion. Add to all which, that Mahomet's victories not only operated by the natural effect of conqueſt, but that they

* Sale's Koran, c. viii. p. 140. † Ib. c. ix. p. 149.
‡ Gibb. ib. p. 337.

were

were conſtantly repreſented, both to his friends and enemies, as divine declarations in his favour. Succeſs was evidence. Proſperity carried with it, not only influence, but proof. "Ye have already," ſays he, after the battle of Bedr, "had a miracle ſhown you, in two armies which attacked each other; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels *." Again, "*Ye* ſlew not thoſe who were ſlain at Bedr, but God ſlew them.—If ye deſire a deciſion of the matter between us, now hath a deciſion come unto you †."

Many more paſſages might be collected out of the Koran to the ſame effect. But they are unneceſſary. The ſucceſs of Mahometaniſm during this, and indeed every future period of its hiſtory, bears ſo little reſemblance to the early propagation of Chriſtianity, that no inference whatever can juſtly be drawn from it to the prejudice of the Chriſtian argument. For what are we

* Sale's Kor. c. iii. p. 36. † Ch. viii. p. 141.

comparing?

comparing? A Galilean peaſant accompanied by a few fiſhermen, with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jeſus without force, without power, without ſupport, without one external circumſtance of attraction or influence, prevailing againſt the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy of his country, againſt the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philoſophy, the wiſdom, the authority of the Roman empire, in the moſt poliſhed and enlightened period of its exiſtence, with Mahomet making his way amongſt Arabs; collecting followers in the midſt of conqueſts and triumphs, in the darkeſt ages and countries of the world, and when ſucceſs in arms not only operated by that command of men's wills and perſons which attends proſperous undertakings, but was conſidered as a ſure teſtimony of divine approbation. That multitudes, perſuaded by this argument, ſhould join the train of a victorious chief; that ſtill greater multitudes ſhould, without any argument, bow down before irreſiſtible power, is a conduct in

which

which we cannot ſee much to ſurpriſe us: in which we can ſee nothing that reſembles the cauſes by which the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity was effected.

The ſucceſs therefore of Mahometaniſm ſtands not in the way of this important concluſion, that the propagation of Chriſtianity, in the manner and under the circumſtances in which it was propagated, is an *unique* in the hiſtory of the ſpecies. A Jewiſh peaſant overthrew the religion of the world.

I have, nevertheleſs, placed the prevalency of the religion amongſt the auxiliary arguments of its truth; becauſe, whether it had prevailed or not, or whether its prevalency can or cannot be accounted for, the direct argument remains ſtill. It is ſtill true, that a great number of men upon the ſpot, perſonally connected with the hiſtory and with the author of the religion, were induced by what they heard and ſaw and knew, not only to change their former opinions, but to give up their time, and ſacrifice their

their eaſe, to traverſe ſeas and kingdoms without reſt and without wearineſs, to commit themſelves to extreme dangers, to undertake inceſſant toils, to undergo grievous ſufferings, and all this, ſolely in conſequence, and in ſupport, of their belief of facts, which, if true, eſtabliſh the truth of the religion, which, if falſe, they muſt have known to be ſo.

PART

PART III.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

CHAP. I.

The Diſcrepancies between the ſeveral Goſpels.

I KNOW not a more raſh or unphiloſophical conduct of the underſtanding, than to reject the ſubſtance of a ſtory, by reaſon of ſome diverſity in the circumſtances with which it is related. The uſual character of human teſtimony is ſubſtantial truth under circumſtantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of juſtice teaches. When accounts of a tranſaction come from the mouths of different witneſſes, it is ſel-

dom that it is not poſſible to pick out apparent or real inconſiſtencies between them. Theſe inconſiſtencies are ſtudiouſly diſplayed by an adverſe pleader, but oftentimes with little impreſſion upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a cloſe and minute agreement induces the ſuſpicion of confederacy and fraud. When written hiſtories touch upon the ſame ſcenes of action, the compariſon almoſt always affords ground for a like reflection. Numerous, and ſometimes important, variations preſent themſelves; not ſeldom alſo, abſolute and final contradictions; yet neither one nor the other are deemed ſufficient to ſhake the credibility of the main fact. The embaſſy of the Jews to deprecate the execution of Claudian's order to place his ſtatue in their temple, Philo places in harveſt, Joſephus in ſeed-time; both contemporary writers. No reader is led by this inconſiſtency to doubt, whether ſuch an embaſſy was ſent, or whether ſuch an order was given. Our own hiſtory ſupplies examples of the ſame kind. In the account of the Marquis of Argyle's death in the reign

of

of Charles the Second, we have a very remarkable contradiction. Lord Clarendon relates that he was condemned to be hanged, which was performed the same day: on the contrary, Burnet, Woodrow, Heath, Echard, concur in stating that he was beheaded; and that he was condemned upon the Saturday, and executed upon the Monday*. Was any reader of English history ever sceptic enough to raise from hence a question, whether the Marquis of Argyle was executed, or not? Yet this ought to be left in uncertainty, according to the principles upon which the Christian history has sometimes been attacked. Dr. Middleton contended, that the different hours of the day assigned to the crucifixion of Christ, by John and by the other evangelists, did not admit of the reconcilement which learned men had proposed; and then concludes the discussion with this hard remark: "We must be forced, with several of the critics, to leave the difficulty just as we found it, chargeable with all the conse-

* See Biog. Britan.

quences of manifeſt inconſiſtency *." But what are theſe conſequences? By no means the diſcrediting of the hiſtory as to the principal fact, by a repugnancy (even ſuppoſing that repugnancy not to be reſolvable into different modes of computation) in the time of the day in which it is ſaid to have taken place.

A great deal of the diſcrepancy, obſervable in the Goſpels, ariſes from *omiſſion*; from a fact or a paſſage of Chriſt's life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another. Now omiſſion is at all times a very uncertain ground of objection. We perceive it, not only in the compariſon of different writers, but even in the ſame writer, when compared with himſelf. There are a great many particulars, and ſome of them of importance, mentioned by Joſephus in his Antiquities, which, as we ſhould have ſuppoſed, ought to have been put down by him

* Middleton's Reflections anſwered by Benſon, Hiſt. Chriſ. vol. iii. p. 50.

in their place in the Jewiſh Wars*. Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio Caſſius, have, all three, written of the reign of Tiberius. Each has mentioned many things omitted by the reſt†, yet no objection is from thence taken to the reſpective credit of their hiſtories. We have in our own times, if there were not ſomething indecorous in the compariſon, the life of an eminent perſon, written by three of his friends, in which there is very great variety in the incidents ſelected by them; ſome apparent, and perhaps ſome real contradictions; yet without any impeachment of the ſubſtantial truth of their accounts, of the authenticity of the books, of the competent information or general fidelity of the writers.

But theſe diſcrepancies will be ſtill more numerous, when men do not write hiſtories but *memoirs*; which is perhaps the true name and proper deſcription of our Goſpels: that is, when they do not undertake, or ever meant to deliver, in order of time, a regular

* Lard. part i. vol. ii. p. 735, et ſeq. † Ib. p. 743.

and complete account of *all* the things of importance, which the perſon, who is the ſubject of their hiſtory, did or ſaid; but only, out of many ſimilar ones, to give ſuch paſſages, or ſuch actions and diſcourſes as offered themſelves more immediately to their attention, came in the way of their enquiries, occurred to their recollection, or were ſuggeſted by their *particular deſign* at the time of writing.

This particular deſign may appear ſometimes, but not always, nor often. Thus I think that the particular deſign which St. Matthew had in view whilſt he was writing the hiſtory of the reſurrection, was to atteſt the faithful performance of Chriſt's promiſe to his diſciples to go before them into Galilee; becauſe he alone, except Mark, who ſeems to have taken it from him, has recorded this promiſe, and he alone has confined his narrative to that ſingle appearance to the diſciples which fulfilled it. It was the preconcerted, the great and moſt public manifeſtation of our Lord's perſon. It was the thing

thing which dwelt upon St. Matthew's mind, and he adapted his narrative to it. But, that there is nothing in St. Matthew's language, which negatives other appearances, or which imports that this his appearance to his diſciples in Galilee, in purſuance of his promiſe, was his firſt or only appearance, is made pretty evident by St. Mark's Goſpel, which uſes the ſame terms concerning the appearance in Galilee as St. Matthew uſes, yet itſelf records two other appearances prior to this: "Go your way, tell his diſciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there ſhall ye ſee him as he ſaid unto you." (xvi. 7.) We might be apt to infer from theſe words, that this was the *firſt* time they were to ſee him; at leaſt, we might infer it, with as much reaſon as we draw the inference from the ſame words in Matthew: yet the hiſtorian himſelf did not perceive that he was leading his readers to any ſuch concluſion; for, in the twelfth and two following verſes of this chapter, he informs us of two appearances, which, by comparing the order of events, are ſhewn to have been

prior to the appearance in Galilee. "He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country; and they went and told it unto the reſidue, neither believed they them: afterwards he appeared unto the eleven, as they ſat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, becauſe they believed not them that had ſeen him after he was riſen."

Probably the ſame obſervation, concerning the *particular deſign* which guided the hiſtorian, may be of uſe in comparing many other paſſages of the Goſpels.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Erroneous Opinions imputed to the Apoſtles.

A Species of candour which is ſhewn towards every other book, is ſometimes refuſed to the Scriptures; and that is, the placing of a diſtinction between judgement and teſtimony. We do not uſually queſtion the credit of a writer, by reaſon of any opinion he may have delivered upon ſubjects unconnected with his evidence; and even upon ſubjects connected with his account, or mixed with it in the ſame diſcourſe or writing, we naturally ſeparate facts from opinions, teſtimony from obſervation, narrative from argument.

To apply this equitable conſideration to the Chriſtian records, much controverſy and much objection has been raiſed concerning the

the quotations of the Old Teſtament found in the New; ſome of which quotations, it is ſaid, are applied in a ſenſe, and to events, apparently different from that which they bear, and from thoſe to which they belong, in the original. It is probable to my apprehenſion, that many of thoſe quotations were intended by the writers of the New Teſtament as nothing more than *accommodations*. They quoted paſſages of their ſcripture, which ſuited, and fell in with, the occaſion before them, without always undertaking to aſſert, that the occaſion was in the view of the author of the words. Such accommodations of paſſages from old authors, from books eſpecially which are in every one's hands, are common with writers of all countries; but in none, perhaps, were more to be expected, than in the writings of the Jews, whoſe literature was almoſt entirely confined to their ſcriptures. Thoſe prophecies which are alledged with more ſolemnity, and which are accompanied with a preciſe declaration, that they originally reſpected the event then related, are, I think, truly alledged. But

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were it otherwiſe; is the judgement of the writers of the New Teſtament, in interpreting paſſages of the Old, or ſometimes, perhaps, in receiving eſtabliſhed interpretations, ſo connected either with their veracity, or with their means of information concerning what was paſſing in their own times, as that a critical miſtake, even were it clearly made out, ſhould overthrow their hiſtorical credit?—Does it diminiſh it? Has it any thing to do with it?

Another error imputed to the firſt Chriſtians, was the expected approach of the day of judgement. I would introduce this objection by a remark upon what appears to me a ſomewhat ſimilar example. Our Saviour, ſpeaking to Peter of John, ſaid, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee*?" Theſe words, we find, had been ſo miſconſtrued, as that "a report" from thence "went abroad among the brethren, that that diſciple ſhould not die." Suppoſe that this

* John xxi. 23.

had

had come down to us amongſt the prevailing opinions of the early Chriſtians, and that the particular circumſtance, from which the miſtake ſprung, had been loſt (which humanly ſpeaking was moſt likely to have been the caſe,) ſome, at this day, would have been ready to regard and quote the error, as an impeachment of the whole Chriſtian ſyſtem. Yet with how little juſtice ſuch a concluſion would have been drawn, or rather ſuch a preſumption taken up, the information which we happen to poſſeſs enables us now to perceive. To thoſe who think that the ſcriptures lead us to believe, that the early Chriſtians, and even the Apoſtles, expected the approach of the day of judgement in their own times, the ſame reflection will occur, as that which we have made with reſpect to the more partial perhaps and temporary, but ſtill no leſs ancient, error concerning the duration of St. John's life. It was an error, it may be likewiſe ſaid, which would effectually hinder thoſe who entertained it from acting the part of impoſtors.

The

The difficulty which attends the ſubject of the preſent chapter, is contained in this queſtion: If we once admit the fallibility of the apoſtolic judgement, where are we to ſtop, or in what can we rely upon it? To which queſtion, as arguing with unbelievers, and as arguing for the ſubſtantial truth of the Chriſtian hiſtory, and for that alone, it is competent to the advocate of Chriſtianity to reply, Give me the apoſtle's teſtimony, and I do not ſtand in need of their judgement; give me the facts, and I have complete ſecurity for every concluſion I want.

But, although I think that it is competent to the Chriſtian apologiſt to return this anſwer; I do not think that it is the only anſwer which the objection is capable of receiving. The two following cautions, founded, I apprehend, in the moſt reaſonable diſtinctions, will exclude all uncertainty upon this head which can be attended with danger.

Firſt, to ſeparate what was the object of the apoſtolic miſſion, and declared by them

to

to be ſo, from what was extraneous to it, or only incidentally connected with it. Of points clearly extraneous to the religion, nothing need be ſaid. Of points incidentally connected with it, ſomething may be added. Demoniacal poſſeſſion is one of theſe points: concerning the reality of which, as this place will not admit the examination, or even the production of the arguments on either ſide of the queſtion, it would be arrogance in me to deliver any judgement. And it is unneceſſary. For what I am concerned to obſerve is, that even they who think that it was a general, but erroneous, opinion of thoſe times; and that the writers of the New Teſtament, in common with other Jewiſh writers of that age, fell into the manner of ſpeaking and of thinking upon the ſubject, which then univerſally prevailed; need not be alarmed by the conceſſion, as though they had any thing to fear from it, for the truth of Chriſtianity. The doctrine was not what Chriſt brought into the world. It appears in the Chriſtian records, incidentally and accidentally, as being the ſubſiſting

opinion

opinion of the age and country in which his miniſtry was exerciſed. It was no part of the object of *his* revelation, to regulate men's opinions concerning the action of ſpiritual ſubſtances upon animal bodies. At any rate it is unconnected with teſtimony. If a dumb perſon was by a word reſtored to the uſe of his ſpeech, it ſignifies little to what cauſe the dumbneſs was aſcribed; and the like of every other cure wrought upon thoſe who are ſaid to have been poſſeſſed. The malady was real, the cure was real, whether the popular explication of the cauſe was well founded, or not. The matter of fact, the change, ſo far as it was an object of ſenſe, or of teſtimony, was in either caſe the ſame.

Secondly, that, in reading the apoſtolic writings, we diſtinguiſh between their doctrines and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation properly ſo called; yet in propounding theſe doctrines in their writings or diſcourſes, they were wont to illuſtrate, ſupport and enforce them,

by ſuch analogies, arguments, and conſiderations as their own thoughts ſuggeſted. Thus the call of the Gentiles, that is, the admiſſion of the Gentiles to the Chriſtian profeſſion without a previous ſubjection to the law of Moſes, was imparted to the Apoſtles by revelation, and was atteſted by the miracles which attended the Chriſtian miniſtry amongſt them. The Apoſtle's own aſſurance of the matter reſted upon this foundation. Nevertheleſs, St. Paul, when treating of the ſubject, offers a great variety of topics in its proof and vindication. The doctrine itſelf muſt be received; but is it neceſſary, in order to defend Chriſtianity, to defend the propriety of every compariſon, or the validity of every argument, which the apoſtle has brought into the diſcuſſion? The ſame obſervation applies to ſome other inſtances; and is, in my opinion, very well founded. "When divine writers argue upon any point, we are always bound to believe the concluſions that their reaſonings end in, as parts of divine revelation; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or

even

even to aſſent to, all the premiſes made uſe of by them, in their whole extent, unleſs it appear plainly, that they affirm the premiſes as expreſsly as they do the concluſions proved by them *."

* Burnet's Expoſ. art. 6.

CHAP. III.

The Connection of Chriſtianity with the Jewiſh Hiſtory.

UNDOUBTEDLY, our Saviour aſſumes the divine origin of the Moſaic inſtitution: and, independently of his authority, I conceive it to be very difficult to aſſign any other cauſe for the commencement or exiſtence of that inſtitution; eſpecially for the ſingular circumſtance of the Jews adhering to the unity, when every other people ſlid into polytheiſm; for their being men in religion, children in every thing elſe; behind other nations in the arts of peace and war, ſuperior to the moſt improved in their ſentiments and doctrines relating to the deity*. Undoubtedly

* "In the doctrine, for example of the unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniſcience, the omnipreſence, the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and the creation, preſervation,

doubtedly alſo, our Saviour recogniſes the prophetic character of many of their ancient writers. So far, therefore, we are bound as Chriſtians to go. But to make Chriſtianity anſwerable with its life, for the circumſtantial truth of each ſeparate paſſage of the Old Teſtament, the genuineneſs of every book, the information, fidelity, and judgement of every writer in it, is to bring, I will not ſay

ſervation, and government of the world." Campbell on Mir. p. 207. To which we may add, in the acts of their religion not being accompanied either with cruelties or impurities; in the religion itſelf being free from a ſpecies of ſuperſtition which prevailed univerſally in the popular religions of the ancient world, and which is to be found perhaps in all religions that have their origin in human artifice and credulity, viz. fanciful connections between certain appearances, and actions, and the deſtiny of nations or individuals. Upon theſe conceits reſted the whole train of auguries and auſpices, which formed ſo much even of the ſerious part of the religions of Greece and Rome, and of the charms and incantations which were practiſed in thoſe countries by the common people. From every thing of this ſort the religion of the Jews, and of the Jews alone, was free. Vid. Prieſtley's Lectures on the Truth of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelation, 1794.

great, but unneceſſary difficulties, into the whole ſyſtem. Theſe books were univerſally read and received by the Jews of our Saviour's time. He and his apoſtles, in common with all other Jews, referred to them, alluded to them, uſed them. Yet, except where he expreſsly aſcribes a divine authority to particular predictions, I do not know that we can ſtrictly draw any concluſion from the books being ſo uſed and applied, beſide the proof, which it unqueſtionably is, of their notoriety and reception at that time. In this view our ſcriptures afford a valuable teſtimony to thoſe of the Jews. But the nature of this teſtimony ought to be underſtood. It is ſurely very different from, what it is ſometimes repreſented to be, a ſpecific ratification of each particular fact and opinion; and not only of each particular fact, but of the motives aſſigned for every action, together with the judgement of praiſe or diſpraiſe beſtowed upon them. St. James, in his epiſtle *,

* v. 11.

ſays,

ſays, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord." Notwithſtanding this text, the reality of Job's hiſtory, and even the exiſtence of ſuch a perſon, has been always deemed a fair ſubject of inquiry and diſcuſſion amongſt Chriſtian divines. St. James's authority is conſidered as good evidence of the exiſtence of the book of Job at that time, and of its reception by the Jews, and of nothing more. St. Paul, in his ſecond epiſtle to Timothy*, has this ſimilitude: "Now, as Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes, ſo do theſe alſo reſiſt the truth." Theſe names are not found in the Old Teſtament. And it is uncertain, whether St. Paul took them from ſome apocryphal writing then extant, or from tradition. But no one ever imagined, that St. Paul is here aſſerting the authority of the writing, if it was a written account which he quoted, or making himſelf anſwerable for the authenticity of the tradition; much leſs, that he ſo involves himſelf with either

* iii. 8.

of theſe queſtions as that the credit of his own hiſtory and miſſion ſhould depend upon the fact, whether "Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes, or not." For what reaſon a more rigorous interpretation ſhould be put upon other references, it is difficult to know. I do not mean, that other paſſages of the Jewiſh hiſtory ſtand upon no better evidence than the hiſtory of Job, or of Jannes and Jambres (I think much otherwiſe); but I mean, that a reference in the New Teſtament, to a paſſage in the Old, does not ſo fix its authority, as to exclude all inquiry into its credibility, or into the ſeparate reaſons upon which that credibility is founded; and that it is an unwarrantable, as well as unſafe rule to lay down concerning the Jewiſh hiſtory, what was never laid down concerning any other, that either every particular of it muſt be true, or the whole falſe.

I have thought it neceſſary to ſtate this point explicitly, becauſe a faſhion revived by Voltaire, and purſued by the diſciples of his ſchool,

ſchool, ſeems to have much prevailed of late, of attacking Chriſtianity through the ſides of Judaiſm. Some objections of this claſs are founded in miſconſtruction, ſome in exaggeration; but all proceed upon a ſuppoſition, which has not been made out by argument, viz. that the atteſtation, which the author and firſt teachers of Chriſtianity gave to the divine miſſion of Moſes and the prophets, extends to every point and portion of the Jewiſh hiſtory; and ſo extends, as to make Chriſtianity reſponſible in its own credibility, for the circumſtantial truth, I had almoſt ſaid for the critical exactneſs, of every narrative contained in the Old Teſtament.

CHAP. IV.

Rejection of Chriſtianity.

WE acknowledge that the Chriſtian religion, although it converted great numbers, did not produce an univerſal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and countries in which it appeared. And this want of a more complete and extenſive ſucceſs, is called the *rejection* of the Chriſtian hiſtory and miracles; and has been thought by ſome, to form a ſtrong objection to the reality of the facts which the hiſtory contains.

The matter of the objection divides itſelf into two parts, as it relates to the Jews, and as it relates to Heathen nations; becauſe the minds of theſe two deſcriptions of men may have been, with reſpect to Chriſtianity, under the influence of very different cauſes. The caſe of the Jews, inaſmuch as our

our Saviour's miniſtry was originally addreſſed to them, offers itſelf firſt to our conſideration.

Now, upon the ſubject of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, with *us* there is but one queſtion, viz. whether the miracles were actually wrought? From acknowledging the miracles we paſs inſtantaneouſly to the acknowledgment of the whole. No doubt lies between the premiſes and the concluſion. If we believe the works, or any one of them, we believe in Jeſus. And this order of reaſoning is become ſo univerſal and familiar, that we do not readily apprehend how it could ever have been otherwiſe. Yet it appears to me perfectly certain, that the ſtate of thought, in the mind of a Jew of our Saviour's age, was totally different from this. After allowing the reality of the miracle, he had a great deal to do to perſuade himſelf that Jeſus was the Meſſiah. This is clearly intimated by various paſſages of the goſpel hiſtory. It appears that, in the apprehenſion of the writers

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of the New Teſtament, the miracles did not, irreſiſtibly carry, even thoſe who ſaw them, to the concluſion intended to be drawn from them; or ſo compel aſſent, as to leave no room for ſuſpenſe, for the exerciſe of candour, or the effects of prejudice. And to this point, at leaſt, the evangeliſts may be allowed to be good witneſſes; becauſe it is a point, in which exaggeration or diſguiſe would have been the other way. Their accounts, if they could be ſuſpected of falſehood, would rather have magnified, than diminiſhed, the effects of the miracles.

John vii. 21—31. "Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel—If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumciſion, that the law of Moſes ſhould not be broken, are ye angry at me, becauſe I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement. Then ſaid ſome of them of Jeruſalem, Is not this he whom they ſeek to kill? but lo, he ſpeaketh boldly, and

and they ſay nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Chriſt? *Howbeit we know this man, whence he is; but, when Chriſt cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* Then cried Jeſus in the temple as he taught, ſaying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of myſelf, but he that ſent me is true, whom ye know not; but I know him, for I am from him, and he hath ſent me. Then they ſought to take him, but no man laid hands on him, becauſe his hour was not yet come; *and many of the people believed on him, and ſaid, When Chriſt cometh, will he do more miracles than thoſe which this man hath done?*"

This paſſage is very obſervable. It exhibits the reaſoning of different ſorts of perſons upon the occaſion of a miracle, which perſons of all ſorts are repreſented to have acknowledged as real. One ſort of men thought, that there was ſomething very extraordinary in all this; but that ſtill Jeſus could not be the Chriſt, becauſe there was a cir-

a circumſtance in his appearance, which militated with an opinion concerning Chriſt, in which they had been brought up, and of the truth of which, it is probable, they had never entertained a particle of doubt, viz. that "when Chriſt cometh no man knoweth whence he is." Another ſort were inclined to believe him to be the Meſſiah. But even theſe did not argue as we ſhould; did not conſider the miracle as of itſelf deciſive of the queſtion, as what, if once allowed, excluded all farther debate upon the ſubject, but founded their opinion upon a kind of comparative reaſoning, "When Chriſt cometh, will he do *more* miracles than thoſe which this man hath done?"

Another paſſage in the ſame evangeliſt, and obſervable for the ſame purpoſe, is that in which he relates the reſurrection of Lazarus: "Jeſus," he tells us, (xi. 43, 44.) "when he had thus ſpoken, cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound

bound about with a napkin. Jeſus ſaith unto them, Looſe him and let him go." One might have expected, that at leaſt all thoſe who ſtood by the ſepulchre, when Lazarus was raiſed, would have believed in Jeſus. Yet the evangeliſt does not ſo repreſent it. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had ſeen the things which Jeſus did, believed on him; but *ſome of them* went their ways to the Phariſees, and told them what things Jeſus had done." We cannot ſuppoſe that the evangeliſt meant, by this account, to leave his readers to imagine that any of the ſpectators doubted about the truth of the miracle. Far from it. Unqueſtionably, he ſtates the miracle to have been fully allowed: yet the perſons who allowed it, were, according to his repreſentation, capable of retaining hoſtile ſentiments towards Jeſus. "Believing in Jeſus" was not only to believe that he wrought miracles, but that he was the Meſſiah. With us there is no difference between theſe two things; with them there was the greateſt. And the difference is apparent in this tranſaction. If

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St. John has repreſented the conduct of the Jews upon this occaſion truly (and why he ſhould not I cannot tell, for it rather makes againſt him than for him), it ſhews clearly the principles upon which their judgement proceeded. Whether he has related the matter truly or not, the relation itſelf diſcovers the writer's own opinion of thoſe principles, and that alone poſſeſſes conſiderable authority. In the next chapter, we have a reflection of the evangeliſt, entirely ſuited to this ſtate of the caſe; "but though he had done ſo many miracles before them, yet believed they not on him*," The evangeliſt does not mean to impute the defect of their belief to any doubt about the miracles, but to their not perceiving, what all now ſufficiently perceive, and what they would have perceived had not their underſtandings been governed by ſtrong prejudices, the infallible atteſtation which the works of Jeſus bore to the truth of his pretenſions.

* xii. 37.

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The ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel contains a very circumſtantial account of the cure of a blind man; a miracle ſubmitted to all the ſcrutiny and examination which a ſceptic could propoſe. If a modern unbeliever had drawn up the interrogatories, they could hardly have been more critical or ſearching. The account contains alſo a very curious conference between the Jewiſh rulers and the patient, in which the point for our preſent notice, is their reſiſtance of the force of the miracle, and of the concluſion to which it led, after they had failed in diſcrediting its evidence. "We know that God ſpake unto Moſes, but as for this fellow we know not whence he is." That was the anſwer which ſet their minds at reſt. And by the help of much prejudice, and great unwillingneſs to yield, it might do ſo. In the mind of the poor man reſtored to ſight, which was under no ſuch biaſs, felt no ſuch reluctance, the miracle had its natural operation. "Herein," ſays he, "is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, yet he hath opened

mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not ſinners; but if any man be a worſhipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." We do not find, that the Jewiſh rulers had any other reply to make to this defence, than that which authority is ſometimes apt to make to argument, "Doſt thou teach us?"

If it ſhall be inquired how a turn of thought, ſo different from what prevails at preſent, ſhould obtain currency with the ancient Jews, the anſwer is found in two opinions, which are proved to have ſubſiſted in that age and country. The one was, their expectation of a Meſſiah of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jeſus beſpoke him to be; the other, their perſuaſion of the agency of demons in the production of ſupernatural effects. Theſe opinions are not *ſuppoſed* by us for the purpoſe of argument, but are evidently recogniſed

niſed in the Jewiſh writings, as well as in ours. And it ought moreover to be conſidered, that in theſe opinions the Jews of that age had been from their infancy brought up; that they were opinions, the grounds of which they had probably few of them enquired into, and of the truth of which they entertained no doubt. And I think that theſe two opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The firſt put them upon ſeeking out ſome excuſe to themſelves for not receiving Jeſus in the character in which he claimed to be received; and the ſecond ſupplied them with juſt ſuch an excuſe as they wanted. Let Jeſus work what miracles he would, ſtill the anſwer was in readineſs, "that he wrought them by the aſſiſtance of Beelzebub." And to this anſwer no reply could be made, but that which our Saviour did make, by ſhewing that the tendency of his miſſion was ſo adverſe to the views with which this Being was, by the objectors themſelves, ſuppoſed to act, that it could not reaſonably be ſuppoſed that he would

aſſiſt in carrying it on. The power diſplayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewiſh ſolution, becauſe the interpoſition of inviſible agents being once admitted, it is impoſſible to aſcertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumſcribed. We of this day may be diſpoſed, poſſibly, to think ſuch opinions too abſurd to have been ever ſeriouſly entertained. I am not bound to contend for the credibility of the opinions. They were at leaſt as reaſonable as the belief in witchcraft. They were opinions in which the Jews of that age had from their infancy been inſtructed: and thoſe who cannot ſee enough in the force of this reaſon, to account for their conduct towards our Saviour, do not ſufficiently conſider how ſuch opinions may ſometimes become very general in a country, and with what pertinacity, when once become ſo, they are, for that reaſon alone, adhered to. In the ſuſpenſe which theſe notions, and the prejudices reſulting from them, might occaſion, the candid and docile and humble-minded would probably decide in Chriſt's favour;

favour; the proud and obſtinate, together with the giddy and the thoughtleſs, almoſt univerſally againſt him.

This ſtate of opinion diſcovers to us alſo the reaſon of what ſome chooſe to wonder at, why the Jews ſhould reject miracles when they ſaw them, yet rely ſo much upon the tradition of them in their own hiſtory. It does not appear, that it had ever entered into the minds of thoſe who lived in the time of Moſes and the Prophets, to aſcribe *their* miracles to the ſupernatural agency of evil Beings. The ſolution was not then invented. And the authority of Moſes and the Prophets being eſtabliſhed, and become the foundation of the national polity and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion, and the ſubjects of that polity, ſhould apply to their hiſtory a reaſoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both.

II. The infidelity of the gentile world,

and that more eſpecially of men of rank and learning in it, is reſolvable into a principle which, in my judgement, will account for the inefficacy of any argument or any evidence whatever, viz. contempt prior to examination. The ſtate of religion amongſt the Greeks and Romans had a natural tendency to induce this diſpoſition. Dionyſius Halicarnaſſenſis remarks, that there were ſix hundred different kinds of religions, or ſacred rites exerciſed at Rome*. The ſuperior claſſes of the community treated them all as fables. Can we wonder then, that Chriſtianity was included in the number, without enquiry into its ſeparate merits, or the particular grounds of its pretenſions? It might be either true or falſe for any thing they knew about it. The religion had nothing in its character which immediately engaged their notice. It mixed with no politics. It produced no fine writers. It contained no curious ſpeculations. When it did reach their knowledge, I doubt not but that

* Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hiſt. vol. i. p. 371.

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it appeared to them a very ſtrange ſyſtem—ſo unphiloſophical—dealing ſo little in argument and diſcuſſion, in ſuch arguments however and diſcuſſions as they were accuſtomed to entertain. What is ſaid of Jeſus Chriſt, of his nature, office, and miniſtry, would be, in the higheſt degree, aliene from the conceptions of their theology. The redeemer, and the deſtined judge, of the human race, a poor young man executed at Jeruſalem with two thieves upon a croſs! Still more would the language, in which the Chriſtian doctrine was delivered, be diſſonant and barbarous to their ears. What knew they of grace, of redemption, of juſtification, of the blood of Chriſt ſhed for the ſons of men, of reconcilement, of mediation? Chriſtianity was made up of points they had never thought of; of terms which they had never heard.

It was preſented alſo to the imagination of the learned heathen, under additional diſadvantage, by reaſon of its real, and ſtill more of its nominal, connection with Ju-

daiſm. It ſhared in the obloquy and ridicule, with which that people and their religion were treated by the Greeks and Romans. They regarded Jehovah himſelf only as the idol of the Jewiſh nation, and what was related of him, as of a piece with what was told of the tutelar deities of other countries: nay, the Jews were in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous race; ſo that whatever reports of a miraculous nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the heathen world as falſe and frivolous. When they heard of Chriſtianity, they heard of it as a quarrel amongſt this people, about ſome articles of their own ſuperſtition. Deſpiſing therefore, as they did, the whole ſyſtem, it was not probable that they would enter, with any degree of ſeriouſneſs or attention, into the detail of its diſputes, or the merits of either ſide. How little they knew, and with what careleſſneſs they judged, of theſe matters, appears, I think, pretty plainly from an example of no leſs weight than that of Tacitus, who in a grave and profeſſed diſcourſe upon the hiſtory

hiſtory of the Jews, ſtates, that they worſhipped the effigy of an aſs*. The paſſage is a proof, how prone the learned men of theſe times were, and upon how little evidence, to heap together ſtories which might increaſe the contempt and odium in which that people was held. The ſame fooliſh charge is alſo confidently repeated by Plutarch †.

It is obſervable, that all theſe conſiderations are of a nature to operate with the greateſt force upon the higheſt ranks; upon men of education, and that order of the public from which *writers* are principally taken: I may add alſo, upon the philoſophical as well as the libertine character: upon the Antonines or Julian, not leſs than upon Nero or Domitian; and more particularly, upon that large and poliſhed claſs of men, who acquieſced in the general perſuaſion, that all they had to do was to practiſe the duties of morality, and to worſhip the deity

* Tac. Hiſt. lib. v. c. 2. † Sympoſ. lib. iv. queſ. 5.

more patrio; a habit of thinking, liberal as it may appear, which ſhuts the door againſt every argument for a new religion. The conſiderations above mentioned would acquire alſo ſtrength from the prejudice which men of rank and learning univerſally entertain againſt any thing that *originates* with the vulgar and illiterate; which prejudice is known to be as obſtinate as any prejudice whatever.

Yet Chriſtianity was ſtill making its way; and, amidſt ſo many impediments to its progreſs, ſo much difficulty in procuring audience and attention, its actual ſucceſs is more to be wondered at, than that it ſhould not have univerſally conquered ſcorn and indifference, fixed the levity of a voluptuous age, or, through a cloud of adverſe prejudications, opened for itſelf a paſſage to the hearts and underſtandings of the ſcholars of the age.

And the cauſe which is here aſſigned for the rejection of Chriſtianity by men of rank

rank and learning among the heathens, namely, a ſtrong antecedent contempt, accounts alſo for their *ſilence* concerning it. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it. They would have given their reaſons. Whereas what men repudiate upon the ſtrength of ſome prefixed perſuaſion, or from a ſettled contempt of the ſubject, of the perſons who propoſe it, or of the manner in which it is propoſed, they do not naturally write books about, or notice much in what they write upon other ſubjects.

The letters of the younger Pliny furniſh an example of this ſilence, and let us, in ſome meaſure, into the cauſe of it. From his celebrated correſpondence with Trajan, we know that the Chriſtian religion prevailed in a very conſiderable degree in the province over which he preſided; that it had excited his attention; that he had enquired into the matter, juſt ſo much as a Roman magiſtrate might be expected to enquire, viz. whether the religion contained any opi-

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nions dangerous to government; but that of its doctrines, its evidences, or its books, he had not taken the trouble to inform himself with any degree of care or correctneſs. But although Pliny had viewed Chriſtianity in a nearer poſition, than moſt of his learned countrymen ſaw it in; yet he had regarded the whole with ſuch negligence and diſdain (farther than as it ſeemed to concern his adminiſtration), that, in more than two hundred and forty letters of his which have come down to us, the ſubject is never once again mentioned. If out of this number the two letters between him and Trajan had been loſt, with what confidence would the obſcurity of the Chriſtian religion have been argued from Pliny's ſilence about it, and with how little truth!

The name and character which Tacitus has given to Chriſtianity, "exitiabilis ſuperſtitio" (a pernicious ſuperſtition), and by which two words he diſpoſes of the whole queſtion of the merits or demerits of the religion, afford a ſtrong proof how little he

he knew, or concerned himſelf to know, about the matter. I apprehend that I ſhall not be contradicted, when I take upon me to aſſert, that no unbeliever of the preſent age would apply this epithet to the Chriſtianity of the New Teſtament, or not allow that it was entirely unmerited. Read the inſtructions given, by a great teacher of the religion, to thoſe very Roman converts, of whom Tacitus ſpeaks; and given alſo a very few years before the time of which he is ſpeaking; and which are not, let it be obſerved, a collection of fine ſayings brought together from different parts of a large work, but ſtand in one entire paſſage of a public letter, without the intermixture of a ſingle thought which is frivolous or exceptionable. "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Not ſlothful in buſineſs, fervent in ſpirit; ſerving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing inſtant in prayer, diſtributing to the neceſſity of ſaints, given to hoſpitality.

Bleſs

Bleſs them which perſecute you; bleſs, and curſe not; rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the ſame mind one towards another: mind not high things, but condeſcend to men of low eſtate. Be not wiſe in your own conceits. Recompenſe to no man evil for evil. Provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men. If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourſelves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine! I will repay, ſaith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for, in ſo doing, thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God: whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God; and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.

damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame, for he is the miniſter of God to thee for good: but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the ſword in vain: for he is the miniſter of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake: for, for this cauſe, pay ye tribute alſo, for they are God's miniſters, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; cuſtom, to whom cuſtom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law: for this, thou ſhalt not commit adultery, thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt not ſteal, thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, thou ſhalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly com-

prehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying*."

Read this, and then think of exitiabilis superstitio!!—Or if we be not allowed, in contending with heathen authorities, to produce our books against theirs, we may at least be permitted to confront theirs with one another. Of this "pernicious superstition," what could *Pliny* find to blame, when he was led, by his office, to institute something like an examination into the conduct and

* Rom. xii. 9.—xiii. 13.

principles

principles of the ſect? He diſcovered nothing, but that they were wont to meet together on a ſtated day before it was light, and ſing among themſelves a hymn to Chriſt as a God, and to bind themſelves by an oath, not to the commiſſion of any wickedneſs, but not to be guilty of theft, robbery, or adultery; never to falſify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build the following obſervations:

Firſt, That we are well warranted in calling the view under which the learned men of that age beheld Chriſtianity, an obſcure and diſtant view. Had Tacitus known more of Chriſtianity, of its precepts, duties, conſtitution or deſign, however he had diſcredited the ſtory, he would have reſpected the principle. He would have deſcribed the religion differently, though he had rejected it. It has been very ſatisfactorily ſhewn, that the "ſuperſtition" of the Chriſtians conſiſted

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in worſhipping a perſon unknown to the Roman calendar; and that the "perniciouſneſs" with which they were reproached, was nothing elſe but their oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed polytheiſm: and this view of the matter was juſt ſuch a one as might be expected to occur to a mind, which held the ſect in too much contempt to concern itſelf about the grounds and reaſons of their conduct.

Secondly, We may from hence remark, how little reliance can be placed upon the moſt acute judgements, in ſubjects which they are pleaſed to deſpiſe; and which, of courſe, they from the firſt conſider as unworthy to be enquired into. Had not Chriſtianity ſurvived to tell its own ſtory, it muſt have gone down to poſterity as a "pernicious ſuperſtition;" and that upon the credit of Tacitus's account, much, I doubt not, ſtrengthened by the name of the writer, and the reputation of his ſagacity.

Thirdly, That this contempt prior to examination,

examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greateſt faculties of mind are not free. I know not, indeed, whether men of the greateſt faculties of mind are not the moſt ſubject to it. Such men feel themſelves ſeated upon an eminence. Looking down from their height upon the follies of mankind, they behold contending tenets waſting their idle ſtrength upon one another, with a common diſdain of the abſurdity of them all. This habit of thought, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt, than almoſt any other diſpoſition, to produce haſty and contemptuous, and, by conſequence, erroneous judgements, both of perſons and opinions.

Fourthly, We need not be ſurpriſed at many writers of that age not mentioning Chriſtianity at all, when they who did mention it appear to have entirely miſconceived its nature and character; and, in conſe-

quence of this miſconception, to have regarded it with negligence and contempt.

To the knowledge of the greateſt part of the learned heathens, the facts of the Chriſtian hiſtory could only come by report. The books, probably, they had never looked into. The ſettled habit of their minds was, and long had been, an indiſcriminate rejection of all reports of the kind. With theſe ſweeping concluſions truth hath no chance. It depends upon diſtinction. If they would not enquire, how ſhould they be convinced? It might be founded in truth, though they, who made no ſearch, might not diſcover it.

"Men of rank and fortune, of wit and abilities, are often found, even in Chriſtian countries, to be ſurpriſingly ignorant of religion, and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the heathens. Their thoughts were all fixed upon other things, upon reputation and glory, upon wealth and power,

power, upon luxury and pleaſure, upon buſineſs or learning. They thought, and they had reaſon to think, that the religion of their country was fable and forgery, an heap of inconſiſtent lies, which inclined them to ſuppoſe that other religions were no better. Hence it came to paſs, that when the Apoſtles preached the goſpel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many Gentiles knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the leaſt pains to inform themſelves about it. This appears plainly from ancient hiſtory *.

I think it by no means unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the heathen public, eſpecially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided into two claſſes; thoſe who deſpiſed Chriſtianity beforehand, and thoſe who received it. In correſpondency with which diviſion of character, the

* Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſ. Rel. p. 66, ed. 4th.

writers of that age would alſo be of two claſſes; thoſe who were ſilent about Chriſtianity, and thoſe who were Chriſtians. "A good man, who attended ſufficiently to the Chriſtian affairs, would become a Chriſtian; after which his teſtimony ceaſed to be Pagan, and became Chriſtian *."

I muſt alſo add, that I think it ſufficiently proved, that the notion of magic was reſorted to by the heathen adverſaries of Chriſtianity, in like manner as that of diabolical agency had before been by the Jews. Juſtin Martyr alledges this as his reaſon for arguing from prophecy, rather than from miracles. Origen imputes this evaſion to Celſus; Jerome to Porphyry; and Lactantius to the heathen in general. The ſeveral paſſages, which contain theſe teſtimonies, will be produced in the next chapter. It being difficult however to aſcertain in what degree this notion prevailed, eſpecially a-

* Hartley, Obſ. p. 119.

mongſt

mongſt the ſuperior ranks of the heathen communities, another, and I think an adequate, cauſe has been aſſigned for their infidelity. It is probable that in many caſes the two cauſes would operate together.

CHAP. V.

That the Chriſtian miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Chriſtian writers themſelves, ſo fully or frequently as might have been expected.

I SHALL conſider this objection, firſt, as it applies to the letters of the Apoſtles, preſerved in the New Teſtament; and ſecondly, as it applies to the remaining writings of other early Chriſtians.

The epiſtles of the apoſtles are either hortatory or argumentative. So far as they were occupied in delivering leſſons of duty, rules of public order, admonitions againſt certain prevailing corruptions, againſt vice, or any particular ſpecies of it, or in fortifying and encouraging the conſtancy of the diſciples under the trials to which they were expoſed, there appears to be no place or occaſion

occaſion for more of theſe references than we actually find.

So far as the epiſtles are argumentative, the nature of the argument which they handle, accounts for the infrequency of theſe alluſions. Theſe epiſtles were not written to prove the truth of Chriſtianity. The ſubject under conſideration was not that which the miracles decided, the reality of our Lord's miſſion; but it was that which the miracles did not decide, the nature of his perſon or power, the deſign of his advent, its effects, and of thoſe effects the value, kind, and extent. Still I maintain, that miraculous evidence lies at the bottom of the argument. For nothing could be ſo prepoſterous as for the diſciples of Jeſus to diſpute amongſt themſelves, or with others, concerning his office or character, unleſs they believed that he had ſhewn, by ſupernatural proofs, that there was ſomething extraordinary in both. Miraculous evidence, therefore, forming not the texture of theſe

arguments, but the ground and ſubſtratum, if it be occaſionally diſcerned, if it be incidentally appealed to, it is exactly ſo much as ought to take place, ſuppoſing the hiſtory to be true.

As a further anſwer to the objection, that the apoſtolic epiſtles do not contain ſo frequent, or ſuch direct and circumſtantial recitals of miracles as might be expected, I would add, *that the apoſtolic epiſtles reſemble in this reſpect the apoſtolic ſpeeches*, which ſpeeches are given by a writer who diſtinctly records numerous miracles wrought by theſe apoſtles themſelves, and by the founder of the inſtitution in their preſence: that it is unwarrantable to contend, that the omiſſion, or frequency, of ſuch recitals in the ſpeeches of the apoſtles, negatives the exiſtence of the miracles, when the ſpeeches are given in immediate conjunction with the hiſtory of thoſe miracles; and that a concluſion which cannot be inferred from the ſpeeches, without contradicting the whole

tenor

tenor of the book which contains them, cannot be inferred from letters, which, in this reſpect, are ſimilar only to the ſpeeches.

To prove the ſimilitude which we alledge, it may be remarked, that although in St. Luke's goſpel, the apoſtle Peter is repreſented to have been preſent at many deciſive miracles wrought by Chriſt; and although the ſecond part of the ſame hiſtory aſcribes other deciſive miracles to Peter himſelf, particularly the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple (Acts iii. 1.), the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 1.), the cure of Æneas (Acts ix. 40.), the reſurrection of Dorcas (Acts ix. 34.); yet out of ſix ſpeeches of Peter, preſerved in the Acts, I know but two in which reference is made to the miracles wrought by Chriſt, and only one in which he refers to miraculous powers poſſeſſed by himſelf. In his ſpeech upon the day of Pentecoſt, Peter addreſſes his audience with great ſolemnity thus: "Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words; Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you,

you, by miracles and wonders and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know, &c.*" In his ſpeech upon the converſion of Cornelius, he delivers his teſtimony to the miracles performed by Chriſt in theſe words: "We are witneſſes of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jeruſalem †." But in this latter ſpeech no alluſion appears to the miracles wrought by himſelf, notwithſtanding that the miracles above enumerated all preceded the time in which it was delivered. In his ſpeech upon the election of Matthias‡, no diſtinct reference is made to any of the miracles of Chriſt's hiſtory, except his reſurrection. The ſame alſo may be obſerved of his ſpeech upon the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple §; the ſame in his ſpeech before the Sanhedrim ‖; the ſame in his ſecond apology in the preſence of that aſſembly. Stephen's long ſpeech contains no reference whatever to

* Acts ii. 22. † x. 39. ‡ i. 15.
§ iii. 12. ‖ iv. 9.

miracles, though it be expreſsly related of him, in the book which preſerves the ſpeech, and almoſt immediately before the ſpeech, "that he did great wonders and miracles among the people*." Again, although miracles be expreſsly attributed to St. Paul in the Acts of the Apoſtles, firſt generally, as at Iconium (Acts xiv. 3.), during the the whole tour through the Upper Aſia (xiv. 27. xv. 12.), at Epheſus (xix. 11, 12.); ſecondly, in ſpecific inſtances, as the blindneſs of Elymas at Paphos †, the cure of the cripple at Lyſtra ‡, of the Pythoneſs at Philippi §, the miraculous liberation from priſon in the ſame city ||, the reſtoration of Eutychus ¶, the predictions of his ſhipwreck **, the viper at Melita ††, the cure of Publius's father ‡‡; at all which miracles, except the two firſt, the hiſtorian himſelf was preſent: notwithſtanding, I ſay, this poſitive aſcription of miracles to St. Paul, yet in the ſpeeches delivered by him, and given as de-

* Acts vi. 8. † xiii. 7. ‡ xiv. 8. § xvi. 16. || xvi. 26. ¶ xx. 10. ** xxvii. 1. †† xxviii. 6. ‡‡ xxviii. 8.

livered

livered by him, in the ſame book in which the miracles are related, and the miraculous powers aſſerted, the appeals to his own miracles, or indeed to any miracles at all, are rare and incidental. In his ſpeech at Antioch in Piſidia*, there is no alluſion but to the reſurrection. In his diſcourſe at Miletus †, none to any miracle; none in his ſpeech before Felix ‡; none in his ſpeech before Feſtus §; except to Chriſt's reſurrection, and his own converſion.

Agreeably hereunto, in thirteen letters aſcribed to St. Paul, we have inceſſant references to Chriſt's reſurrection, frequent references to his own converſion, three indubitable references to the miracles which he wrought ‖, four other references to the ſame, leſs direct yet highly probable ¶; but more copious or circumſtantial recitals we have not. The conſent, therefore, between St. Paul's ſpeeches and letters, is in this reſpect

* Acts xiii. 16. † xx. 17. ‡ xxiv. 10. § xxv. 8.
‖ Gal. iii. 5. Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.
¶ 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. Eph. iii. 7. Gal. ii. 8. 1 Theſſ. i. 5.

ſufficiently

ſufficiently exact: and the reaſon in both is the ſame; namely, that the miraculous hiſtory was all along *preſuppoſed*, and that the queſtion, which occupied the ſpeaker's and the writer's thoughts, was this: whether, allowing the hiſtory of Jeſus to be true, he was, upon the ſtrength of it, to be received as the promiſed Meſſiah; and, if he was, what were the conſequences, what was the object and benefit of his miſſion?

The general obſervation which has been made upon the apoſtolic writings, namely, that the ſubject of which they treated, did not lead them to any direct recital of the Chriſtian hiſtory, belongs alſo to the writings of the apoſtolic fathers. The epiſtle of Barnabas is, in its ſubject and general compoſition, much like the epiſtle to the Hebrews; an allegorical application of divers paſſages of the Jewiſh hiſtory, of their law and ritual, to thoſe parts of the Chriſtian diſpenſation in which the author perceived a reſemblance. The epiſtle of Clement was written for the ſole purpoſe of

quieting certain diſſenſions that had ariſen amongſt the members of the church of Corinth, and of reviving in their minds that temper and ſpirit of which their predeceſſors in the goſpel had left them an example. The works of Hermas is a viſion; quotes neither the Old Teſtament nor the New; and merely falls now and then into the language, and the mode of ſpeech, which the author had read in our goſpels. The epiſtles of Polycarp and Ignatius had for their principal object the order and diſcipline of the churches which they addreſſed. Yet, under all theſe circumſtances of diſadvantage, the great points of the Chriſtian hiſtory are fully recognized. This hath been ſhewn in its proper place *.

There is, however, another claſs of writers, to whom the anſwer above given, viz. the unſuitableneſs of any ſuch appeals or references as the objection demands, to the ſubjects of which the writings treated, does

* Vol. I. p. 126—131.

not

not apply; and that is, the claſs of ancient *apologiſts*, whoſe declared deſign it was, to defend Chriſtianity, and to give the reaſons of their adherence to it. It is neceſſary, therefore, to enquire how the matter of the objection ſtands in theſe.

The moſt ancient apologiſt, of whoſe works we have the ſmalleſt knowledge, is Quadratus. Quadratus lived about ſeventy years after the aſcenſion, and preſented his apology to the emperor Adrian. From a paſſage of this work, preſerved in Euſebius, it appears that the author did directly and formally appeal to the miracles of Chriſt, and in terms as expreſs and confident as we could deſire. The paſſage (which has been once already ſtated) is as follows: "The works of our Saviour were always conſpicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed, and they that were raiſed from the dead, were ſeen, not only when they were healed or raiſed, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilſt he dwelled on this earth, but alſo after his departure, and for a good

good while after it; inſomuch as that ſome of them have reached to our times*." Nothing can be more rational or ſatisfactory than this.

Juſtin Martyr, the next of the Chriſtian apologiſts whoſe work is not loſt, and who followed Quadratus at the diſtance of about thirty years, has touched upon paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory in ſo many places, that a tolerably complete account of Chriſt's life might be collected out of his works. In the following quotation he aſſerts the performance of miracles by Chriſt, in words as ſtrong and poſitive as the language poſſeſſes: "Chriſt healed thoſe who from their birth were blind, and deaf, and lame; cauſing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to ſee: and having raiſed the dead, and cauſed them to live, he by his works excited attention, and induced the men of that age to know him. Who, however, ſeeing theſe things done, ſaid that it was a

* Euſ. Hiſt. l. iv. c. 3.

magical

magical appearance, and dared to call him a magician, and a deceiver of the people *."

In his firſt apology †, Juſtin expreſsly aſſigns the reaſon for his having recourſe to the argument from prophecy, rather than alledging the miracles of the Chriſtian hiſtory: which reaſon was, that the perſons with whom he contended would aſcribe theſe miracles to magic; "leſt any of our opponents ſhould ſay, What hinders, but that he who is called Chriſt by us, being a man ſprung from men, performed the miracles which we attributed to him by magical art?" The ſuggeſtion of this reaſon meets, as I apprehend, the very point of the preſent objection; more eſpecially when we find Juſtin followed in it, by other writers of that age. Irenæus, who came about forty years after him, notices the ſame evaſion in the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, and replies to it by the ſame argument: "But, if

* Juſt. Dial. p. 258, ed. Thirlby.

† Ap. prim. p. 48, ib.

they ſhall ſay, that the Lord performed theſe things by an illuſory appearance (φανλασιωδως), leading theſe objectors to the prophecies, we will ſhew from them, that all things were thus predicted concerning him, and ſtrictly came to paſs *." Lactantius, who lived a century lower, delivers the ſame ſentiment, upon the ſame occaſion. "He performed miracles---we might have ſuppoſed him to have been a magician, as ye ſay, and as the Jews then ſuppoſed, if all the prophets had not with one ſpirit foretold that Chriſt ſhould perform theſe very things †."

But to return to the Chriſtian apologiſts in their order: Tertullian—"That perſon whom the Jews had vainly imagined, from the meanneſs of his appearance, to be a mere man, they afterwards, in conſequence of the power he exerted, conſidered as a magician, when he, with one word, ejected devils out of the bodies of men, gave ſight

* Ir. l. ii. c. 57. † Lact. v. 3.

to

to the blind, cleanſed the leprous, ſtrengthened the nerves of thoſe that had the palſy, and laſtly, with one command, reſtored the dead to life; when he, I ſay, made the very elements obey him, aſſuaged the ſtorms, walked upon the ſeas, demonſtrating himſelf to be the word of God*."

Next in the catalogue of profeſſed apologiſts we may place Origen, who, it is well known, publiſhed a formal defence of Chriſtianity, in anſwer to Celſus, a heathen, who had written a diſcourſe againſt it. I know no expreſſions, by which a plainer or more poſitive appeal to the Chriſtian miracles can be made, than the expreſſions uſed by Origen: "Undoubtedly we do think him to be the Chriſt, and the ſon of God, becauſe he healed the lame and the blind; and we are the more confirmed in this perſuaſion, by what is written in the prophecies, Then ſhall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall hear, and the lame men ſhall

* Tertull. Apolog. p. 20, ed. Priorii, Par. 1675.

leap as an hart. But that he alſo raiſed the dead, and that it is not a fiction of thoſe who wrote the Goſpels, is evident from hence, that, if it had been a fiction, there would have been many recorded to be raiſed up, and ſuch as had been a long time in their graves. But, it not being a fiction, few have been recorded: for inſtance, the daughter of the ruler of a ſynagogue, of whom I do not know why he ſaid, She is not dead but ſleepeth, expreſſing ſomething peculiar to her, not common to all dead perſons; and the only ſon of a widow, on whom he had compaſſion, and raiſed him to life, after he had bid the bearer of the corpſe to ſtop; and the third Lazarus, who had been buried four days." This is poſitively to aſſert the miracles of Chriſt, and it is alſo to comment upon them, and that with a conſiderable degree of accuracy and candour.

In another paſſage of the ſame author*, we meet with the old ſolution of magic

* Or. con. Celſ. lib. ii. ſec. 48.

applied to the miracles of Chriſt by the adverſaries of the religion. "Celſus," ſaith Origen, "well knowing what great works may be alledged to have been done by Jeſus, pretends to grant that the things related of him are true: ſuch as healing diſeaſes, raiſing the dead, feeding multitudes with a few loaves, of which large fragments were left." And then Celſus gives, it ſeems, an anſwer to theſe proofs of our Lord's miſſion, which, as Origen underſtood it, reſolved the phenomena into magic; for Origen begins his reply, by obſerving, "You ſee that Celſus in a manner allows that there is ſuch a thing as magic *."

It appears alſo from the teſtimony of St. Jerome, that Porphyry, the moſt learned and able of the heathen writers againſt Chriſtianity, reſorted to the ſame ſolution: "Unleſs," ſays he, ſpeaking to Vigilantius, "according to the manner of the Gentiles,

* Lard. Jewiſh and Heath. Teſt. vol. ii. p. 294, ed. quarto.

and the profane, of *Porphyry* and Eunomius, you pretend that theſe are the tricks of demons *."

This magic, theſe demons, this illuſory appearance, this compariſon with the tricks of jugglers, by which many of that age accounted ſo eaſily for the Chriſtian miracles, and which anſwers the advocates of Chriſtianity often thought it neceſſary to refute, by arguments drawn from other topics, and particularly from prophecy (to which, it ſeems, theſe ſolutions did not apply), we now perceive to be groſs ſubterfuges. That ſuch reaſons were ever ſeriouſly urged, and ſeriouſly received, is only a proof, what a gloſs and varniſh faſhion can give to any opinion.

It appears, therefore, that the miracles of Chriſt, underſtood, as we underſtand them, in their literal and hiſtorical ſenſe, were poſitively and preciſely aſſerted and appealed

* Jerome con. Vigil.

to

to by the apologiſts for Chriſtianity; which anſwers the allegation of the objection.

I am ready, however, to admit, that the ancient Chriſtian advocates did not inſiſt upon the miracles in argument, ſo frequently as I ſhould have done. It was their lot to contend with notions of magical agency, againſt which the mere production of the facts was not ſufficient for the convincing of their adverſaries: I do not know whether they themſelves thought it quite deciſive of the controverſy. But ſince it is proved, I conceive, with certainty, that the ſparingneſs with which they appealed to miracles, was owing neither to their ignorance, nor their doubt of the facts, it is, at any rate, an objection, not to the truth of the hiſtory, but to the judgement of its defenders.

CHAP. VI.

Want of univerſality in the knowledge and reception of Chriſtianity, and of greater clearneſs in the evidence.

OF a revelation which really came from God, the proof, it has been ſaid, would in all ages be ſo public and manifeſt, that no part of the human ſpecies would remain ignorant of it, no underſtanding could fail of being convinced by it.

The advocates of Chriſtianity do not pretend that the evidence of their religion poſſeſſes theſe qualities. They do not deny that we can conceive it to be within the compaſs of divine power, to have communicated to the world a higher degree of aſſurance, and to have given to his communication a ſtronger and more extenſive influence. For any thing we are able to diſcern, God

God *could* have ſo formed men, as to have perceived the truths of religion intuitively; or to have carried on a communication with the other world, whilſt they lived in this; or to have ſeen the individuals of the ſpecies, inſtead of dying, paſs to heaven by a ſenſible tranſlation. He could have preſented a ſeparate miracle to each man's ſenſes. He could have eſtabliſhed a ſtanding miracle. He could have cauſed miracles to be wrought in every different age and country. Theſe, and many more methods, which we may imagine, if we once give looſe to our imaginations, are, ſo far as we can judge, all practicable.

The queſtion, therefore, is not, whether Chriſtianity poſſeſſes the higheſt poſſible degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence be a ſufficient reaſon for rejecting that which we have.

Now there appears to be no fairer method of judging, concerning any diſpenſation which is alledged to come from God, when a queſtion

a queſtion is made whether ſuch a diſpenſation could come from God or not, than by comparing it with other things which are acknowledged to proceed from the ſame council, and to be produced by the ſame agency. If the diſpenſation in queſtion labour under no defects but what apparently belong to other diſpenſations, theſe ſeeming defects do not juſtify us, in ſetting aſide the proofs which are offered of its authenticity, if they be otherwiſe entitled to credit.

Throughout that order then of nature, of which God is the author, what we find is a ſyſtem of *beneficence*, we are ſeldom or ever able to make out a ſyſtem of *optimiſm*. I mean, that there are few caſes in which, if we permit ourſelves to range in poſſibilities, we cannot ſuppoſe ſomething more perfect, and more unobjectionable, than what we ſee. The rain which deſcends from heaven is confeſſedly amongſt the contrivances of the Creator, for the ſuſtentation of the animals and vegetables which ſubſiſt upon the ſurface of the earth. Yet how partially

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and irregularly is it ſupplied! How much of it falls upon the ſea, where it can be of no uſe; how often is it wanted where it would be of the greateſt! What tracts of continent are rendered deſerts by the ſcarcity of it! Or, not to ſpeak of extreme caſes, how much, ſometimes, do inhabited countries ſuffer by its deficiency or delay!—We could imagine, if to imagine were our buſineſs, the matter to be otherwiſe regulated. We could imagine ſhowers to fall, juſt where and when they would do good; always ſeaſonable, every where ſufficient; ſo diſtributed as not to leave a field upon the face of the globe ſcorched by drought, or even a plant withering for the lack of moiſture. Yet does the difference between the real caſe and the imagined caſe, or the ſeeming inferiority of the one to the other, authorize us to ſay, that the preſent diſpoſition of the atmoſphere is not amongſt the productions or the deſigns of the Deity? Does it check the inference which we draw from the confeſſed beneficence of the proviſion? or does it make us ceaſe to admire the contrivance?—

The

The obſervation, which we have exemplified in the ſingle inſtance of the rain of heaven, may be repeated concerning moſt of the phenomena of nature: and the true concluſion to which it leads is this, that to enquire what the Deity might have done, could have done, or, as we even ſometimes preſume to ſpeak, ought to have done, or, in hypothetical caſes, would have done, and to build any propoſitions upon ſuch enquiries againſt evidence of facts, is wholly unwarrantable. It is a mode of reaſoning which will not do in natural hiſtory, which will not do in natural religion, which cannot therefore be applied with ſafety to revelation. It may have ſome foundation, in certain ſpeculative *a priori* ideas of the divine attributes; but it has none in experience, or in analogy. The general character of the works of nature is, on the one hand, goodneſs both in deſign and effect; and, on the other hand, a liability to difficulty, and to objections, if ſuch objections be allowed, by reaſon of ſeeming incompleteneſs or uncertainty in attaining their end. Chriſtianity participates of this character.

racter. The true ſimilitude between nature and revelation conſiſts in this; that they each bear ſtrong marks of their original; that they each alſo bear appearances of irregularity and defect. A ſyſtem of ſtrict optimiſm may nevertheleſs be the real ſyſtem in both caſes. But what I contend is, that the proof is hidden from *us*; that we ought not to expect to perceive that in revelation, which we hardly perceive in any thing; that beneficence, of which we *can* judge, ought to ſatisfy us, that optimiſm, of which we *cannot* judge, ought not to be ſought after. We can judge of beneficence, becauſe it depends upon effects which we experience, and upon the relation between the means which we ſee acting, and the ends which we ſee produced. We cannot judge of optimiſm, becauſe it neceſſarily implies a compariſon of that which is tried, with that which is not tried; of conſequences which we ſee, with others which we imagine, and concerning many of which, it is more than probable we know nothing; concerning ſome, that we have no notion.

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If Chriſtianity be compared with the ſtate and progreſs of natural religion, the argument of the objector will gain nothing by the compariſon. I remember hearing an unbeliever ſay, that, if God had given a revelation, he would have written it in the ſkies. Are the truths of natural religion written in the ſkies, or in a language which every one reads? or is this the caſe with the moſt uſeful arts, or the moſt neceſſary ſciences of human life? An Otaheitean or an Eſquimaux knows nothing of Chriſtianity; does he know more of the principles of deiſm or morality? which, notwithſtanding his ignorance, are neither untrue, nor unimportant, nor uncertain. The exiſtence of the Deity is left to be collected from obſervations, which every man does not make, which every man, perhaps, is not capable of making. Can it be argued, that God does not exiſt, becauſe, if he did, he would let us ſee him; or diſcover himſelf to mankind by proofs (ſuch as, we may think, the nature of the ſubject merited), which no inadvertency could miſs, no prejudice withſtand?

If

If Chriſtianity be regarded as a providential inſtrument for the melioration of mankind, its progreſs and diffuſion reſembles that of other cauſes by which human life is improved. The diverſity is not greater, nor the advance more ſlow in religion, than we find it to be in learning, liberty, government, laws. The Deity hath not touched the order of nature in vain. The Jewiſh religion produced great and permanent effects: the Chriſtian religion hath done the ſame. It hath diſpoſed the world to amendment. It hath put things in a train. It is by no means improbable, that it may become univerſal; and that the world may continue in that ſtate ſo long as that the duration of its reign may bear a vaſt proportion to the time of its partial influence.

When we argue concerning Chriſtianity, that it muſt neceſſarily be true, becauſe it is beneficial, we go perhaps too far on one ſide: and we certainly go too far on the other, when we conclude that it muſt be falſe, becauſe it is not ſo efficacious as we could have ſuppoſed.

ſuppoſed. The queſtion of its truth is to be tried upon its proper evidence, without deferring much to this ſort of argument, on either ſide. "The evidence," as Biſhop Butler hath rightly obſerved, "depends upon the judgement we form of human conduct, under given circumſtances, of which it may be preſumed that we know ſomething; the objection ſtands upon the ſuppoſed conduct of the Deity, under relations with which we are not acquainted."

What would be the real effect of that overpowering evidence which our adverſaries require in a revelation, it is difficult to foretell; at leaſt, we muſt ſpeak of it as of a diſpenſation of which we have no experience. Some conſequences however would, it is probable, attend this œconomy, which do not ſeem to befit a revelation that proceeded from God. One is, that irreſiſtible proof would reſtrain the voluntary powers too much; would not anſwer the purpoſe of trial and probation; would call for no exerciſe of candour, ſerioufneſs, humility, enquiry; no

ſubmiſſion

ſubmiſſion of paſſions, intereſts, and prejudices, to moral evidence and to probable truth; no habits of reflection; none of that previous deſire to learn, and to obey the will of God, which forms perhaps the teſt of the virtuous principle, and which induces men to attend, with care and reverence, to every credible intimation of that will, and to reſign preſent advantages and preſent pleaſures to every reaſonable expectation of propitiating his favour. "Men's moral probation may be, whether they will take due care to inform themſelves by impartial conſideration; and, afterwards, whether they will act as the caſe requires, upon the evidence which they have. And this, we find by experience, is often our probation in our temporal capacity *."

II. Theſe modes of communication would leave no place for the admiſſion of *internal evidence*; which ought, perhaps, to bear a conſiderable part in the proof of every reve-

* Butler's Analogy, part ii. c. vi.

lation, becauſe it is a ſpecies of evidence, which applies itſelf to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue, and which operates in proportion to the degree of thoſe qualities which it finds in the perſon whom it addreſſes. Men of good diſpoſitions, amongſt Chriſtians, are greatly affected by the impreſſion which the ſcriptures themſelves make upon their minds. Their conviction is much ſtrengthened by theſe impreſſions. And this perhaps was intended to be one effect to be produced by the religion. It is likewiſe true, to whatever cauſe we aſcribe it (for I am not in this work at liberty to introduce the Chriſtian doctrine of grace or aſſiſtance, or the Chriſtian promiſe, "that, if any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*,") — it is true, I ſay, that they who ſincerely act, or ſincerely endeavour to act, *according* to what they believe, that is, according to the juſt reſult of the probabilities, or, if you pleaſe, the poſſibilities in natural and reveal-

* John vii. 17.

ed

ed religion, which they themſelves perceive, and according to a rational eſtimate of conſequences, and, above all, according to the juſt effect of thoſe principles of gratitude and devotion, which even the view of nature generates in a well-ordered mind, *ſeldom fail of proceeding farther*. This alſo may have been exactly what was deſigned.

Whereas may it not be ſaid, that irreſiſtible evidence would confound all characters, and all diſpoſitions? would ſubvert, rather than promote, the true purpoſe of the divine councils, which is not to produce *obedience* by a force little ſhort of mechanical conſtraint (which obedience would be regularity not virtue, and would hardly perhaps differ from that which inanimate bodies pay to the laws impreſſed upon their nature), but to treat moral agents agreeably to what they are; which is done, when light and motives are of ſuch kinds, and are imparted in ſuch meaſures, that the influence of them depends upon the recipients themſelves? "It is not meet to govern rational free agents

in viâ by ſight and ſenſe. It would be no trial or thanks to the moſt ſenſual wretch to forbear ſinning if heaven and hell were open to his ſight. That ſpiritual viſion and fruition is our ſtate in patriâ." (Baxter's Reaſons, p. 357.) There may be truth in this thought, though roughly expreſſed. Few things are more improbable than that we (the human ſpecies) ſhould be the higheſt order of beings in the univerſe; that animated nature ſhould aſcend from the loweſt reptile to us, and all at once ſtop there. If there be claſſes above us of rational intelligences, clearer manifeſtations may belong to them. This may be one of the diſtinctions. And it may be one, to which we ourſelves hereafter ſhall attain.

III. But thirdly; may it not alſo be aſked, whether the perfect diſplay of a future ſtate of exiſtence would be compatible with the activity of civil life, and with the ſucceſs of human affairs? I can eaſily conceive that this impreſſion may be overdone; that it may ſo ſeize and fill the thoughts, as to leave

leave no place for the cares and offices of men's ſeveral ſtations, no anxiety for worldly proſperity, or even for a worldly proviſion, and, by conſequence, no ſufficient ſtimulus to ſecular induſtry. Of the firſt Chriſtians we read, "that all that believed were together, and had all things common; and ſold their poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart*." This was extremely natural, and juſt what might be expected from miraculous evidence coming with full force upon the ſenſes of mankind: but I much doubt, whether, if this ſtate of mind had been univerſal, or long continued, the buſineſs of the world could have gone on. The neceſſary arts of ſocial life would have been little cultivated. The plough and the loom would have ſtood ſtill. Agriculture, manufactures, trade, and naviga-

* Acts ii. 44—46.

tion, would not, I think, have flouriſhed, if they could have been exerciſed at all. Men would have addicted themſelves to contemplative and aſcetic lives, inſtead of lives of buſineſs and of uſeful induſtry. We obſerve that St. Paul found it neceſſary, frequently to recall his converts to the ordinary labours and domeſtic duties of their condition; and to give them, in his own example, a leſſon of contented application to their worldly employments.

By the manner in which the religion is now propoſed, a great portion of the human ſpecies is enabled, and of theſe, multitudes of every generation are induced to ſeek and to effectuate their ſalvation through the medium of Chriſtianity, without interruption of the proſperity or of the regular courſe of human affairs.

CHAP. VII.

The ſuppoſed Effects of Chriſtianity.

THAT a religion, which, under every form in which it is taught, holds forth the final reward of virtue, and puniſhment of vice, and propoſes thoſe diſtinctions of virtue and vice, which the wiſeſt and moſt cultivated part of mankind confeſs to be juſt, ſhould not be believed, is very poſſible; but that, ſo far as it is believed, it ſhould not produce any good, but rather a bad effect upon public happineſs, is a propoſition, which it requires very ſtrong evidence to render credible. Yet many have been found to contend for this paradox, and very confident appeals have been made to hiſtory, and to obſervation, for the truth of it.

In the concluſions, however, which theſe writers draw, from what they call experi-

ence, two ſources, I think, of miſtake, may be perceived.

One is, that they look for the influence of religion in the wrong place.

The other, that they charge Chriſtianity with many conſequences, for which it is not reſponſible.

1. The influence of religion is not to be ſought for in the councils of princes, in the debates or reſolutions of popular aſſemblies, in the conduct of governments towards their ſubjects, or of ſtates and ſovereigns towards one another; of conquerors at the head of their armies, or of parties intriguing for power at home (topics which alone almoſt occupy the attention, and fill the pages of hiſtory); but muſt be perceived, if perceived at all, in the ſilent courſe of private and domeſtic life. Nay more; even *there* its influence may not be very obvious to obſervation. If it check, in ſome degree, perſonal diſſoluteneſs, if it beget a general probity

bity in the tranſaction of buſineſs, if it produce ſoft and humane manners in the maſs of the community, and occaſional exertions of laborious or expenſive benevolence in a few individuals, it is all the effect which can offer itſelf to external notice. The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the ſubſtance of the religion, its hopes and conſolations, its intermixture with the thoughts by day and by night, the devotion of the heart, the control of appetite, the ſteady direction of the will to the commands of God, is neceſſarily inviſible. Yet upon theſe depend the virtue and the happineſs of millions. This cauſe renders the repreſentations of hiſtory, with reſpect to religion, defective and fallacious, in a greater degree than they are upon any other ſubject. Religion operates moſt upon thoſe of whom hiſtory knows the leaſt; upon fathers and mothers in their families, upon men ſervants and maid ſervants, upon the orderly tradeſman, the quiet villager, the manufacturer at his loom, the huſbandman in his fields. Amongſt ſuch its influence collectively may

be of ineſtimable value, yet its effects in the mean time little, upon thoſe who figure upon the ſtage of the world. *They* may know nothing of it; they may believe nothing of it; they may be actuated by motives more impetuous than thoſe which religion is able to excite. It cannot, therefore, be thought ſtrange, that this influence ſhould elude the graſp and touch of public hiſtory; for what is public hiſtory, but a regiſter of the ſucceſſes and diſappointments, the vices, the follies, and the quarrels, of thoſe who engage in contentions for power?

I will add, that much of this influence may be felt in times of public diſtreſs, and little of it in times of public wealth and ſecurity. This alſo increaſes the uncertainty of any opinions that we draw from hiſtorical repreſentations. The influence of Chriſtianity is commenſurate with no effects which hiſtory ſtates. We do not pretend that it has any ſuch neceſſary and irreſiſtible power over the affairs of nations, as to ſurmount the force of other cauſes.

The Chriſtian religion alſo acts upon public uſages and inſtitutions, by an operation which is only ſecondary and indirect. Chriſtianity is not a code of civil law. It can only reach public inſtitutions through private character. Now its influence upon private character may be conſiderable, yet many public uſages and inſtitutions, repugnant to its principles, may remain. To get rid of theſe, the reigning part of the community muſt act, and act together. But it may be long before the perſons who compoſe this body, be ſufficiently touched with the Chriſtian character, to join in the ſuppreſſion of practices, to which they and the public have been reconciled, by cauſes which will reconcile the human mind to any thing, by habit and intereſt. Nevertheleſs, the effects of Chriſtianity, even in this view, have been important. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives. It has ſoftened the adminiſtration of deſpotic, or of nominally deſpotic governments. It has aboliſhed polygamy. It has reſtrained the licentiouſneſs of divorces. It has put

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an end to the expoſure of children, and the immolation of ſlaves. It has ſuppreſſed the combats of gladiators *, and the impurities of religious rites. It has baniſhed, if not unnatural vices, at leaſt the toleration of them. It has greatly meliorated the condition of the laborious part, that is to ſay, of the maſs of every community, by procuring for them a day of weekly reſt. In all countries, in which it is profeſſed, it has produced numerous eſtabliſhments for the relief of ſickneſs and poverty; and, in ſome, a regular and general proviſion by law. It has triumphed over the ſlavery eſtabliſhed in the Roman empire: it is contending, and, I truſt, will one day prevail, againſt the worſe ſlavery of the Weſt Indies.

A Chriſtian writer †, ſo early as in the

* Lipſius affirms, (Sat. b. i. c. 12.) that the gladiatorial ſhows ſometimes coſt Europe twenty or thirty thouſand lives in a month; and that not only the men but even the women of all ranks were paſſionately fond of theſe ſhows. See Biſhop Porteus's Sermon XIII.

† Bardeſanes ap. Euſeb. Præp. Evang. vi. 10.

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ſecond century, has teſtified the reſiſtance which Chriſtianity made to wicked and licentious practices, though eſtabliſhed by law and by public uſage. "Neither in Parthia, do the Chriſtians, though Parthians, uſe polygamy; nor in Perſia, though Perſians, do they marry their own daughters; nor, among the Bactri, or Galli, do they violate the ſanctity of marriage; nor, wherever they are, do they ſuffer themſelves to be overcome by ill-conſtituted laws and manners."

Socrates did not deſtroy the idolatry of Athens, or produce the ſlighteſt revolution in the manners of his country.

But the argument to which I recur, is, that the benefit of religion being felt chiefly in the obſcurity of private ſtations, neceſſarily eſcapes the obſervation of hiſtory. From the firſt general notification of Chriſtianity to the preſent day, there have been in every age many millions, whoſe names were never heard of, made better by it, not only in their conduct, but in their diſpoſition; and happier,

pier, not ſo much in their external circumſtances, as in that which is *inter præcordia*, in that which alone deſerves the name of happineſs, the tranquillity and conſolation of their thoughts. It has been, ſince its commencement, the author of happineſs and virtue to millions and millions of the human race. Who is there that would not wiſh his ſon to be a Chriſtian?

Chriſtianity alſo, in every country in which it is profeſſed, hath obtained a ſenſible, although not a complete influence, upon the public judgement of morals. And this is very important. For without the occaſional correction which public opinion receives, by referring to ſome fixed ſtandard of morality, no man can foretell into what extravagancies it might wander. Aſſaſſination might become as honourable as duelling; unnatural crimes be accounted as venial, as fornication is wont to be accounted. In this way it is poſſible, that many may be kept in order by Chriſtianity, who are not themſelves Chriſtians. They may be

be guided by the rectitude which it communicates to public opinion. Their conſciences may ſuggeſt their duty truly, and they may aſcribe theſe ſuggeſtions to a moral ſenſe, or to the native capacity of the human intellect, when in fact they are nothing more than the public opinion, reflected from their own minds; an opinion, in a conſiderable degree, modified by the leſſons of Chriſtianity. "Certain it is, and this is a great deal to ſay, that the generality, even of the meaneſt and moſt vulgar and ignorant people, have truer and worthier notions of God, more juſt and right apprehenſions concerning his attributes and perfections, a deeper ſenſe of the difference of good and evil, a greater regard to moral obligations and to the plain and moſt neceſſary duties of life, and a more firm and univerſal expectation of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, than, in any heathen country, any conſiderable number of men were found to have had *."

* Clark, Ev. Nat. Rev. p. 208. ed. v.

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After all, the value of Chriſtianity is not to be appreciated by its *temporal* effects. The object of revelation is to influence human conduct in this life; but what is gained to happineſs by that influence, can only be eſtimated by taking in the whole of human exiſtence. Then, as hath already been obſerved, there may be alſo great conſequences of Chriſtianity, which do not belong to it as a revelation. The effects upon human ſalvation, of the miſſion, of the death, of the preſent, of the future agency of Chriſt, may be univerſal, though the religion be not univerſally known.

Secondly, I aſſert that Chriſtianity is charged with many conſequences for which it is not reſponſible. I believe that religious motives have had no more to do in the formation of nine-tenths of the intolerant and perſecuting laws, which in different countries have been eſtabliſhed upon the ſubject of religion, than they have had to do in England with the making of the game-laws. Theſe meaſures, although they have

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the Chriſtian religion for their ſubject, are reſolvable into a principle which Chriſtianity certainly did not plant (and which Chriſtianity could not univerſally condemn, becauſe it is not univerſally wrong), which principle is no other than this, that they who are in poſſeſſion of power do what they can to keep it. Chriſtianity is anſwerable for no part of the miſchief which has been brought upon the world by perſecution, except that which has ariſen from *conſcientious* perſecutors. Now theſe perhaps have never been, either numerous, or powerful. Nor is it to Chriſtianity that even *their* miſtake can fairly be imputed. They have been miſled by an error not properly Chriſtian or religious, but by an error in their moral philoſophy. They purſued the particular, without adverting to the general conſequence. Believing certain articles of faith, or a certain mode of worſhip, to be highly conducive, or perhaps eſſential, to ſalvation, they thought themſelves bound to bring all they could, by every means, into them. And this they thought, with-

out conſidering what would be the effect of ſuch a concluſion, when adopted amongſt mankind as a general rule of conduct. Had there been in the New Teſtament, what there are in the Koran, precepts authorizing coercion in the propagation of the religion, and the uſe of violence towards unbelievers, the caſe would have been different. This diſtinction could not have been taken, or this defence made.

I apologize for no ſpecies nor degree of perſecution, but I think that even the fact has been exaggerated. The ſlave trade deſtroys more in a year, than the inquiſition does in a hundred, or perhaps hath done ſince its foundation.

If it be objected, as I apprehend it will be, that Chriſtianity is chargeable with every miſchief, of which it has been the *occaſion*, though not the motive; I anſwer, that, if the malevolent paſſions be there, the world will never want occaſions. The noxious element will always find a conductor. Any

point will produce an explosion. Did the applauded intercommunity of the Pagan theology preserve the peace of the Roman world? Did it prevent oppressions, proscriptions, massacres, devastations? Was it bigotry that carried Alexander into the East, or brought Cæsar into Gaul? Are the nations of the world, into which Christianity hath not found its way, or from which it hath been banished, free from contentions? Are their contentions less ruinous and sanguinary? Is it owing to Christianity, or to the want of it, that the finest regions of the East, the countries *inter quatuor maria*, the peninsula of Greece, together with a great part of the Mediterranean coast, are at this day a desert? or that the banks of the Nile, whose constantly renewed fertility is not to be impaired by neglect, or destroyed by the ravages of war, serve only for the scene of a ferocious anarchy, or the supply of unceasing hostilities? Europe itself has known no religious wars for some centuries, yet has hardly ever been without war. Are the calamities, which at this day afflict

it, to be imputed to Chriſtianity? Hath Poland fallen by a Chriſtian cruſade? Hath the overthrow in France, of civil order and ſecurity, been effected by the votaries of our religion, or by the foes? Amongſt the awful leſſons, which the crimes and the miſeries of that country afford to mankind, this is one, that, in order to be a perſecutor, it is not neceſſary to be a bigot: that in rage and cruelty, in miſchief and deſtruction, fanaticiſm itſelf can be outdone by infidelity.

Finally, If war, as it is now carried on between nations, produce leſs miſery and ruin than formerly, we are indebted perhaps to Chriſtianity for the change, more than to any other cauſe. Viewed therefore even in its relation to this ſubject, it appears to have been of advantage to the world. It hath humaniſed the conduct of wars; it hath ceaſed to excite them.

The differences of opinion, that have in all ages prevailed amongſt Chriſtians, fall very

very much within the alternative which has been ſtated. If we poſſeſſed the diſpoſition which Chriſtianity labours, above all other qualities, to inculcate, theſe differences would do little harm. If that diſpoſition be wanting, other cauſes, even were theſe abſent, would continually riſe up, to call forth the malevolent paſſions into action. Differences of opinion, when accompanied with mutual charity, which Chriſtianity forbids them to violate, are for the moſt part innocent, and for ſome purpoſes uſeful. They promote enquiry, diſcuſſion, and knowledge. They help to keep up an attention to religious ſubjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and ſilence of univerſal agreement. I do not know that it is in any degree true, that the influence of religion is the greateſt, where there are the feweſt diſſenters.

CHAP. VIII.

The Concluſion.

IN religion, as in every other ſubject of human reaſoning, much depends upon the *order* in which we diſpoſe our enquiries. A man who takes up a ſyſtem of divinity with a previous opinion that either every part muſt be true, or the whole falſe, approaches the diſcuſſion with great diſadvantage. No other ſyſtem, which is founded upon moral evidence, would bear to be treated in the ſame manner. Nevertheleſs, in a certain degree, we are all introduced to our religious ſtudies under this prejudication. And it cannot be avoided. The weakneſs of the human judgement in the early part of youth, yet its extreme ſuſceptibility of impreſſion, renders it neceſſary to furniſh it with ſome opinions, and with ſome principles, or other. Or indeed, without much expreſs

expreſs care, or much endeavour for this purpoſe, the tendency of the mind of man to aſſimilate itſelf to the habits of thinking and ſpeaking which prevail around him, produces the ſame effect. That indifferency and ſuſpenſe, that waiting and equilibrium of the judgement, which ſome require in religious matters, and which ſome would wiſh to be aimed at in the conduct of education, are impoſſible to be preſerved. They are not given to the condition of human life.

It is a conſequence of this ſituation that the doctrines of religion come to us before the proofs; and come to us with that mixture of explications and inferences from which no public creed is, or can be, free. And the effect which too frequently follows, from Chriſtianity being preſented to the underſtanding in this form, is, that when any articles, which appear as parts of it, contradict the apprehenſion of the perſons to whom it is propoſed, men of raſh and confident tempers haſtily and indiſcriminately reject the whole. But is this to do juſtice,

either to themſelves, or to the religion? The rational way of treating a ſubject of ſuch acknowledged importance is to attend, in the firſt place, to the general and ſubſtantial truth of its principles, and to that alone. When we once feel a foundation; when we once perceive a ground of credibility in its hiſtory, we ſhall proceed with ſafety to enquire into the interpretation of its records, and into the doctrines which have been deduced from them. Nor will it either endanger our faith, or diminiſh or alter our motives for obedience, if we ſhould diſcover that theſe concluſions are formed with very different degrees of probability, and poſſeſs very different degrees of importance.

This conduct of the underſtanding, dictated by every rule of right reaſoning, will uphold perſonal Chriſtianity, even in thoſe countries in which it is eſtabliſhed under forms the moſt liable to difficulty and objection. It will alſo have the further effect of guarding us againſt the prejudices which are wont to ariſe in our minds to the diſadvan-

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tage of religion, from obſerving the numerous controverſies which are carried on amongſt its profeſſors; and likewiſe of inducing a ſpirit of lenity and moderation in our judgement, as well as in our treatment of thoſe who ſtand, in ſuch controverſies, upon ſides oppoſite to ours. What is clear in Chriſtianity we ſhall find to be ſufficient, and to be infinitely valuable; what is dubious, unneceſſary to be decided, or of very ſubordinate importance; and what is moſt obſcure, will teach us to bear with the opinions which others may have formed upon the ſame ſubject. We ſhall ſay to thoſe who the moſt widely diſſent from us, what Auguſtine ſaid to the worſt heretics of his age; "Illi in vos ſæviant, qui neſciunt, cum quo labore verum inveniatur, et quam difficile caveantur errores---qui neſciunt, cum quantâ difficultate ſanetur oculus interioris hominis---qui neſciunt, quibus ſuſpiriis et gemitibus fiat, ut ex quantulacunque parte poſſit intelligi Deus *."

* Aug. contr. Ep. Fund. cap. ii. n. 2, 3.

A judge-

A judgement, moreover, which is once pretty well ſatisfied of the general truth of the religion, will not only thus diſcriminate in its doctrines, but will poſſeſs ſufficient ſtrength to overcome the reluctance of the imagination to admit articles of faith which are attended with difficulty of apprehenſion, if ſuch articles of faith appear to be truly parts of the revelation. It was to be expected beforehand, that what related to the œconomy, and to the perſons, of the inviſible world, which revelation profeſſes to do, and which, if true, it actually does, ſhould contain ſome points remote from our analogies, and from the comprehenſion of a mind which hath acquired all its ideas from ſenſe and from experience.

It hath been my care, in the preceding work, to preſerve the ſeparation between evidences and doctrines as inviolable as I could; to remove from the primary queſtion all conſiderations which have been unneceſſarily joined with it; and to offer a defence to Chriſtianity, which every Chriſtian

tian might read, without ſeeing the tenets in which he had been brought up attacked or decried: and it always afforded a ſatisfaction to my mind to obſerve that this was practicable; that few or none of our many controverſies with one another affect or relate to the proofs of our religion; that the rent never deſcends to the foundation.

The truth of Chriſtianity depends upon its leading facts, and upon them alone. Now of theſe we have evidence which ought to ſatisfy us, at leaſt until it appear that mankind have ever been deceived by the ſame. We have ſome unconteſted and inconteſtable points, to which the hiſtory of the human ſpecies hath nothing ſimilar to offer. A Jewiſh peaſant changed the religion of the world, and that, without force, without power, without ſupport; without one natural ſource or circumſtance of attraction, influence, or ſucceſs. Such a thing hath not happened in any other inſtance. The companions of this perſon, after he himſelf had been put to death for his attempt, aſſerted his

his ſupernatural character, founded upon his ſupernatural operations; and, in teſtimony of the truth of their aſſertions, *i. e.* in conſequence of their own belief of that truth, and in order to communicate the knowledge of it to others, voluntarily entered upon lives of toil and hardſhip, and, with a full experience of their danger, committed themſelves to the laſt extremities of perſecution. This hath not a parallel. More particularly, a very few days after this perſon had been publicly executed, and in the very city in which he was buried, theſe his companions declared with one voice that his body was reſtored to life; that they had ſeen him, handled him, eat with him, converſed with him; and, in purſuance of their perſuaſion of the truth of what they told, preached his religion, with this ſtrange fact as the foundation of it, in the face of thoſe who had killed him, who were armed with the power of the country, and neceſſarily and naturally diſpoſed to treat his followers as they had treated himſelf; and having done this upon the ſpot where the event took

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place, carried the intelligence of it abroad, in deſpite of difficulties and oppoſition, and where the nature of their errand gave them nothing to expect but deriſion, inſult, and outrage. This is without example. Theſe three facts, I think, are certain, and would have been nearly ſo, if the Goſpels had never been written. The Chriſtian ſtory, as to theſe points, hath never varied. No other hath been ſet up againſt it. Every letter, every diſcourſe, every controverſy, amongſt the followers of the religion; every book written by them, from the age of its commencement to the preſent time, in every part of the world in which it hath been profeſſed, and with every ſect into which it hath been divided (and we have letters and diſcourſes written by contemporaries, by witneſſes of the tranſaction, by perſons themſelves bearing a ſhare in it, and other writings following that age in regular ſucceſſion), *concur* in repreſenting theſe facts in this manner. A religion, which now poſſeſſes the greateſt part of the civiliſed world, unqueſtionably ſprang up at Jeruſalem at this time. Some account

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muſt be given of its origin; ſome cauſe aſſigned for its riſe. All the accounts of this origin, all the explications of this cauſe, whether taken from the writings of the early followers of the religion (in which, and in which perhaps alone, it could be expected that they ſhould be diſtinctly unfolded) or from occaſional notices in other writings of that or the adjoining age, either expreſsly alledge the facts above ſtated as the means by which the religion was ſet up, or advert to its commencement in a manner which agrees with the ſuppoſition of theſe facts being true, and which teſtifies their operation and effects.

Theſe propoſitions alone lay a foundation for our faith; for they prove the exiſtence of a tranſaction, which cannot even in its moſt *general* parts be accounted for, upon any reaſonable ſuppoſition, except that of the truth of the miſſion. But the particulars, the *detail* of the miracles or miraculous pretences (for ſuch there neceſſarily muſt have been) upon which this unexampled tranſac-

tion reſted, and *for* which theſe men acted and ſuffered as they did act and ſuffer, it is undoubtedly of great importance to us to know. We *have* this detail from the fountain head, from the perſons themſelves; in accounts written by eye-witneſſes of the ſcene, by contemporaries and companions of thoſe who were ſo; not in one book, but four, each containing enough for the verification of the religion, all agreeing in the fundamental parts of the hiſtory. We have the authenticity of theſe books eſtabliſhed, by more and ſtronger proofs than belong to almoſt any other ancient book whatever, and by proofs which widely diſtinguiſh them from any others claiming a ſimilar authority to theirs. If there were any good reaſon for doubt concerning the names to which theſe books are aſcribed (which there is not, for they were never aſcribed to any other, and we have evidence not long after their publication of their bearing the names which they now bear), their antiquity, of which there is no queſtion, their reputation and authority amongſt the early diſciples of

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the religion, of which there is as little, form a valid proof that they muſt, in the main at leaſt, have agreed with what the firſt teachers of the religion delivered.

When we open theſe ancient volumes, we diſcover in them marks of truth, whether we conſider each in itſelf, or collate them with one another. The writers certainly knew ſomething of what they were writing about, for they manifeſt an acquaintance with local circumſtances, with the hiſtory and uſages of the times, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, living in that age. In every narrative we perceive ſimplicity and undeſignedneſs; the air and the language of reality. When we compare the different narratives together, we find them ſo varying as to repell all ſuſpicion of confederacy; ſo agreeing under this variety, as to ſhew that the accounts had one real tranſaction for their common foundation; often attributing different actions and diſcourſes, to the perſon whoſe hiſtory, or rather memoirs of whoſe hiſtory, they profeſs to relate, yet

actions and diſcourſes ſo ſimilar, as very much to beſpeak the ſame character; which is a coincidence, that, in ſuch writers as they were, could only be the conſequence of their writing from fact, and not from imagination.

Theſe four narratives are confined to the hiſtory of the founder of the religion, and end with his miniſtry. Since however it is certain that the affair went on, we cannot help being anxious to know *how* it proceeded. This intelligence hath come down to us in a work purporting to be written by a perſon, himſelf connected with the buſineſs during the firſt ſtages of its progreſs, taking up the ſtory where the former hiſtories had left it, carrying on the narrative, oftentimes with great particularity, and throughout with the appearance of good ſenſe*, information and candour: ſtating

* See Peter's ſpeech upon curing the cripple (Acts iii. 18), the council of the apoſtles (xv.), Paul's diſcourſe at Athens (xvii. 22), before Agrippa (xxvi.). I notice theſe paſſages, both as fraught with good ſenſe, and as free from the ſmalleſt tincture of enthuſiaſm.

all along the origin, and the only probable origin, of effects which unqueſtionably were produced, together with the natural conſequences of ſituations which unqueſtionably did exiſt; and *confirmed*, in the ſubſtance at leaſt of the account, by the ſtrongeſt poſſible acceſſion of teſtimony which a hiſtory can receive, *original letters*, written by the perſon who is the principal ſubject of the hiſtory, written upon the buſineſs to which the hiſtory relates, and during the period, or ſoon after the period, which the hiſtory compriſes. No man can ſay that this altogether is not a body of ſtrong hiſtorical evidence.

When we reflect that ſome of thoſe from whom the books proceeded, are related to have themſelves wrought miracles, to have been the ſubject of miracles, or of ſupernatural aſſiſtance in propagating the religion, we may perhaps be led to think, that more credit, or a different kind of credit, is due to theſe accounts, than what can be claimed by merely human teſtimony. But this is an

argument which cannot be addreſſed to ſceptics or unbelievers. A man muſt be a Chriſtian before he can receive it. The inſpiration of the hiſtorical ſcriptures, the nature, degree, and extent of that inſpiration, are queſtions undoubtedly of ſerious diſcuſſion, but they are queſtions amongſt Chriſtians themſelves, and not between them and others. The doctrine itſelf is by no means neceſſary to the belief of Chriſtianity, which muſt, in the firſt inſtance at leaſt, depend upon the ordinary maxims of hiſtorical credibility *.

In viewing the detail of miracles recorded in theſe books, we find every ſuppoſition negatived, by which they can be reſolved into fraud or deluſion. They were not ſecret, nor momentary, nor tentative, nor ambiguous; nor performed under the ſanction of authority, with the ſpectators on their ſide, or in affirmance of tenets and practices already eſtabliſhed. We find alſo

* See Powell's Diſcourſes, diſc. xv. p. 245.

the evidence alledged for them, and which evidence was by great numbers received, different from that upon which other miraculous accounts reſt. It was contemporary, it was publiſhed upon the ſpot, it continued; it involved intereſts and queſtions of the greateſt magnitude; it contradicted the moſt fixed perſuaſions and prejudices of the perſons to whom it was addreſſed; it required from thoſe who accepted it, not a ſimple indolent aſſent, but a change, from thenceforward, of principles and conduct, a ſubmiſſion to conſequences the moſt ſerious and the moſt deterring, to loſs and danger, to inſult, outrage, and perſecution. How ſuch a ſtory ſhould be falſe, or, if falſe, how under ſuch circumſtances it ſhould make its way, I think impoſſible to be explained: yet ſuch the Chriſtian ſtory was, ſuch were the circumſtances under which it came forth, and in oppoſition to ſuch difficulties did it prevail.

An event ſo connected with the religion, and with the fortunes, of the Jewiſh people,

as one of their race, one born amongſt them, eſtabliſhing his authority and his law throughout a great portion of the civilized world, it was perhaps to be expected, ſhould be noticed in the prophetic writings of that nation; eſpecially when this perſon, together with his own miſſion, cauſed alſo to be acknowledged the divine original of their inſtitution, and by thoſe who before had altogether rejected it. Accordingly we perceive in theſe writings, various intimations *concurring* in the perſon and hiſtory of Jeſus, in a manner, and in a degree, in which paſſages taken from theſe books could not be made to concur in any perſon arbitrarily aſſumed, or in any perſon, except him, who has been the author of great changes in the affairs and opinions of mankind. Of ſome of theſe predictions the weight depends a good deal upon the concurrence. Others poſſeſs great ſeparate ſtrength: one in particular does this in an eminent degree. It is an entire deſcription, manifeſtly directed to one character and to one ſcene of things: it is extant in a writing, or collection of

writings, declaredly prophetic; and it applies to Chriſt's character, and to the circumſtances of his life and death, with conſiderable preciſion, and in a way which no diverſity of interpretation hath, in my opinion, been able to confound. That the advent of Chriſt, and the conſequences of it, ſhould not have been more diſtinctly revealed in the Jewiſh ſacred books, is, I think, in ſome meaſure accounted for by the conſideration, that for the Jews to have foreſeen the fall of their inſtitution, and that it was to merge at length into a more perfect and comprehenſive diſpenſation, would have cooled too much, and relaxed, their zeal for it, and their adherence to it, upon which zeal and adherence the preſervation in the world of any remains, for many ages, of religious truth might in a great meaſure depend.

Of what a revelation diſcloſes to mankind, one, and only one, queſtion can properly be aſked, "Was it of importance to mankind to know, or to be better aſſured of?"

of?" In this queſtion, when we turn our thoughts to the great Chriſtian doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead, and of a future judgement, no doubt can poſſibly be entertained. He who gives me riches or honours does nothing; he who even gives me health does little, in compariſon with that which lays before me juſt grounds for expecting a reſtoration to life, and a day of account and retribution: which thing Chriſtianity hath done for millions.

Other articles of the Chriſtian faith, although of infinite importance when placed beſide any other topic of human enquiry, are only the adjuncts and circumſtances of this. They are however ſuch as appear worthy of the original to which we aſcribe them. The morality of the religion, whether taken from the precepts or the example of its founder, or from the leſſons of its primitive teachers, derived, as it ſhould ſeem, from what had been inculcated by their maſter, is, in all its parts, wiſe and pure; neither adapted to vulgar prejudices,

nor flattering popular notions, nor excuſing eſtabliſhed practices, but calculated, in the matter of its inſtruction, truly to promote human happineſs, and, in the form in which it was conveyed, to produce impreſſion and effect; a morality, which, let it have proceeded from any perſon whatever, would have been ſatisfactory evidence of his good ſenſe and integrity, of the ſoundneſs of his underſtanding and the probity of his deſigns; a morality, in every view of it, much more perfect than could have been expected from the natural circumſtances and character of the perſon who delivered it; a morality, in a word, which is, and hath been, moſt beneficial to mankind.

Upon the greateſt therefore of all poſſible occaſions, and for a purpoſe of ineſtimable value, it pleaſed the Deity to vouchſafe a miraculous atteſtation. Having done this for the inſtitution, when this alone could fix its authority, or give to it a beginning, he committed its future progreſs to the natural means of human communication, and to the

influence

influence of thoſe cauſes by which human conduct and human affairs are governed. The ſeed being ſown, was left to vegetate; the leaven being inſerted, was left to ferment; and both according to the laws of nature: laws, nevertheleſs, diſpoſed and controlled by that Providence which conducts the affairs of the univerſe, though by an influence inſcrutable, and generally undiſtinguiſhable by us. And in this, Chriſtianity is analogous to moſt other proviſions for happineſs. The proviſion is made; and being made, is left to act according to laws, which, forming part of a more general ſyſtem, regulate this particular ſubject, in common with many others.

Let the conſtant recurrence to our obſervation of contrivance, deſign, and wiſdom in the works of nature, once fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and after that all is eaſy. In the councils of a Being poſſeſſed of the power and diſpoſition which the Creator of the univerſe muſt poſſeſs, it is not improbable that there ſhould be a future

future ſtate; it is not improbable that we ſhould be acquainted with it. A future ſtate rectifies every thing; becauſe if moral agents be made, in the laſt event, happy or miſerable, according to their conduct in the ſtation and under the circumſtances in which they are placed, it ſeems not very material by the operation of what cauſes, according to what rules, or even, if you pleaſe to call it ſo, by what chance or caprice, theſe ſtations are aſſigned, or theſe circumſtances determined. This hypotheſis, therefore, ſolves all that objection to the divine care and goodneſs, which the promiſcuous diſtribution of good and evil (I do not mean in the doubtful advantages of riches and grandeur, but in the unqueſtionably important diſtinctions of health and ſickneſs, ſtrength and infirmity, bodily eaſe and pain, mental alacrity and depreſſion) is apt on ſo many occaſions to create. This one truth changes the nature of things: gives order to confuſion: makes the moral world of a piece with the natural.

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Nevertheleſs, a higher degree of aſſurance than that to which it is poſſible to advance this, or any argument drawn from the light of nature, was neceſſary, eſpecially to overcome the ſhock which the imagination and the ſenſes receive from the effects and the appearances of death; and the obſtruction which from thence ariſes to the expectation of either a continued or a future exiſtence. This difficulty, although of a nature, no doubt, to act very forcibly, will be found, I think, upon reflection, to reſide more in our habits of apprehenſion, than in the ſubject; and that the giving way to it, when we have any reaſonable grounds for the contrary, is rather an indulging of the imagination, than any thing elſe. Abſtractedly conſidered, that is, conſidered without relation to the difference which habit, and merely habit, produces in our faculties and modes of apprehenſion, I do not ſee any thing more in the reſurrection of a dead man, than in the conception of a child; except it be this, that the one comes into his world with a ſyſtem of prior conſciouſneſſes about

about him, which the other does not; and no perſon will ſay, that he knows enough of either ſubject to perceive, that this circumſtance makes ſuch a difference in the two caſes, that the one ſhould be eaſy, and the other impoſſible; the one natural, the other not ſo. To the firſt man the ſucceſſion of the ſpecies would be as incomprehenſible, as the reſurrection of the dead is to us.

Thought is different from motion, perception from impact: the individuality of a mind is hardly conſiſtent with the diviſibility of an extended ſubſtance; or its volition, that is, its power of originating motion, with the inertneſs which cleaves to every portion of matter which our obſervation or our experiments can reach. Theſe diſtinctions lead us to an *immaterial* principle: at leaſt, they do this; they ſo negative the mechanical properties of matter, in the conſtitution of a ſentient, ſtill more of a rational being, that no argment, drawn from theſe properties, can be of any great weight

weight in oppoſition to other reaſons, when the queſtion reſpects the changes of which ſuch a nature is capable, or the manner in which theſe changes are effected. Whatever thought be, or whatever it depend upon, the regular experience of *ſleep* makes one thing concerning it certain, that it can be completely ſuſpended, and completely reſtored.

If any one find it too great a ſtrain upon his thoughts, to admit the notion of a ſubſtance ſtrictly immaterial, that is, from which extenſion and ſolidity are excluded, he can find no difficulty in allowing, that a particle as ſmall as a particle of light, minuter than all conceivable dimenſions, may juſt as eaſily be the depoſitary, the organ, and the vehicle of conſciouſneſs, as the congeries of animal ſubſtance which forms a human body, or the human brain; that, being ſo, it may transfer a proper identity to whatever ſhall hereafter be united to it; may be ſafe amidſt the deſtruction of its integuments; may connect the natural with the ſpiritual, the

the corruptible with the glorified body. If it be ſaid, that the mode and means of all this is imperceptible by our ſenſes, it is only what is true of the moſt important agencies and operations. The great powers of nature are all inviſible. Gravitation, electricity, magnetiſm, though conſtantly preſent, and conſtantly exerting their influence; though within us, near us, and about us; though diffuſed throughout all ſpace, overſpreading the ſurface, or penetrating the contexture of all bodies with which we are acquainted, depend upon ſubſtances and actions which are totally concealed from our ſenſes. The Supreme Intelligence is ſo himſelf.

But whether theſe or any other attempts to ſatisfy the imagination, bear any reſemblance to the truth, or whether the imagination, which, as I have ſaid before, is the mere ſlave of habit, *can* be ſatisfied, or not; when a future ſtate, and the revelation of a future ſtate, is not only perfectly conſiſtent with the attributes of the Being who governs

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the univerſe; but when it is more; when it alone removes the appearances of contrariety which attend the operations of his will towards creatures capable of comparative merit and demerit, of reward and puniſhment; when a ſtrong body of hiſtorical evidence, confirmed by many internal tokens of truth and authenticity, gives us juſt reaſon to believe that ſuch a revelation hath actually been made; we ought to ſet our minds at reſt with the aſſurance, that, in the reſources of creative wiſdom, expedients cannot be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath purpoſed: that either a new and mighty influence will deſcend upon the human world, to reſuſcitate extinguiſhed conſciouſneſs; or that, amidſt the other wonderful contrivances with which the univerſe abounds, and by ſome of which we ſee animal life, in many inſtances, aſſuming improved forms of exiſtence, acquiring new organs, new perceptions, and new ſources of enjoyment, proviſion is alſo made, though by methods ſecret to us (as all the great proceſſes of nature are), for conducting the objects

objects of God's moral government, through the neceſſary changes of their frame, to thoſe final diſtinctions of happineſs and miſery, which he hath declared to be reſerved for obedience and tranſgreſſion, for virtue and vice, for the uſe and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment, of the faculties and opportunities with which he hath been pleaſed, ſeverally, to entruſt, and to try us.

THE END.

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